

REVISED 3/8/2022

Zoom Only

TOLLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION

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 9, 2022

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86358441213?pwd=dUJPbnVDV3BoZW1MT1ZlZ1F1K21XZz09>

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=dUJPbnVDV3BoZW1MT1ZlZ1F1K21XZz09>

- A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- B. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
- C. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 23, 2022

E. 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.

F. CORRESPONDENCE

G. POINTS OF INFORMATION

H. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT – Emily Pereira and Nathalie Mitchell

I. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- H.1 Monthly Financial Report
- H.2 Shortening school year from 182 to 180 days
- H.3 Review - Making a Difference Curriculum

J. COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

K. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

L. BOARD ACTION

M. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (2-minute limit)

Comments must be limited to items on this agenda.

N. POINTS OF INFORMATION

Tolland Town Council - February 22, 2022
Town Council/BOE Joint Meeting – February 24, 2022

O. FUTURE

P. NEW BUSINESS

Q. ADJOURNMENT

TOLLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION
Zoom or In-Person Meeting

REGULAR MEETING – February 23, 2022

Members Present: Ashley Lundgren, Chair; Sophia Shaikh, Vice Chair; Jacob Marie, Secretary; Jennifer Gallichant, Christine Griffin, Dana Philbin, Christina Plourd, Jayden Regisford

Members Absent: Tony Holt

Administrators Present: Dr. Walter Willett, Superintendent of Schools; Tom Poland, Principal, Tolland High School

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

Mr. Marie motioned to move item H1 to after item B.

Ms. Philbin seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

Motion passed unanimously.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- February 7, 2022 – Special meeting
- February 9, 2022 – Special meeting
- February 9, 2022

Mr. Marie motioned to approve the minutes of the February 7th, February 9th, and February 9th meetings.

Ms. Plourd seconded the motion.

Changes: none

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Shane Shaffer, 100 Buff Cap Road, commented that in a few short weeks they will be going on a couple of years into the 15-day flattening of the curve. He believes tonight the Board has the decision to make, in the best interest of the kids, to take their masks off. The Board will either tell kids to take their masks off or make it optional. This is what the Board is here to do.

Families entrust the Board with their kids; however, in the past few years he has seen a decline in his son who attends Birch Grove. He started school during the pandemic. Mr. Shaffer explained that he should not hear from his 5-year-old that he does not have friends because he cannot talk because of the mask and that there is a divider between the desks. Mr. Shaffer saw a decline in his son in how he acted the first year. If people are going to start believing in science – it is not geographical – it is everywhere. Other towns have gotten rid of the mask requirement and vaccine mandates. Mr. Shaffer believes Tolland, and the Board, should have the best interest of the kids in mind. He asked that they give parents back their kids – let parents decide and have that right and not tell them kids have to wear a mask to ride the bus. Last week, he walked his son out to the bus. He was not allowed to board because he did not have a mask and began to cry. Tonight, the Board has the option to let parents have their kids back as per the Governor. He asked that the Board make the decision to give parents their kids

back – parents have this right. If someone wants to send their kids to school in a mask that is fine, but the Board should not force it. Kids are not getting sick – it is not because of the masks or vaccines. Kids need to be able to roll around in the dirt and lick door handles if they wish – they need to be exposed to germs. They are getting sick with masks coming off because they have not been exposed to germs for 2 years. Kids need to be kids. If there was science that COVID was going to kill the kids, he does not believe they would be going to school. He asked that the Board look at reality and what is going on in the community. People are fed up. Mr. Shaffer explained that they entrust the Board as a community to take care of the kids. He asked that they do so and give people back their kids and let parents send them to school how they want. Parents know their kids and do not want others telling their kids what to do.

Julie Brennan, 127 Ellington Road, commented that she supports mask choice and making them optional for kids after the 28th. They have 216 signatures on a petition for mask choice from people in the community. Mask choice does not mean no masks. It is time for parents to be able to choose what is best for their kids. Ms. Brennan explained that not all kids are ok with wearing a mask. One of her daughters is fine wearing it while her other has struggled. This includes headaches and fatigue after wearing a mask for 7 hours in school. She has dark circles under her eyes when she gets home but on days she does not attend school, she does not have the headaches or fatigue. Ms. Brennan's son who is in kindergarten also struggles wearing a mask and has gone backwards in his speech. He cannot see his teacher's face or mouth movements and has regressed. Further, he is fearful of forgetting his mask, not wearing it correctly, and at one point told her that he would always wear his mask because he does not want to make anyone die. Ms. Brennan explained that kids have protected adults for 2 years and it is time to move forward. She asked that the Board agree to make masks optional, the parents' choice starting March 1st, and allow parents to decide what is best for their families and kids. She added that given future restriction lifting here and in D.C., all 8th grade students, vaccinated or unvaccinated, should be able to attend the trip.

Kerri Schneider, 360 Peter Green Road, commented that she is advocating for all of the preschoolers who some are now calling the vulnerable, due to vaccination status, when really children have been the least vulnerable throughout the pandemic. Yet, they are masked while people go to concerts, festivals, and sporting events. The CDC has lowered the speech milestone standards for the first time in 2 decades. Many social emotional cues and language development are from seeing faces and the masks are hurting preschoolers more than they are helping them. It is time they stop asking kids to protect adults and start doing what they can to protect them, their education, and their mental health.

Mary Rose Duberek, 37 Ryan Road, commented on TMS Boys Basketball. The boys played their hearts out this year. They had some victories and some defeats but were resilient dealing with masks, COVID setbacks, cancellations due to transportation issues, and other pandemic-era challenges. The school, athletic director, coaches, Ms. Estevez, along with families and friends made it a great middle school experience. Dealing with adversity and coming out strong made it a winning season.

Renie Besaw, 230 Grant Hill Road, commented that she believes parents should have a choice regarding masking. There is clear evidence masking is detrimental for some kids and may be beneficial for others. It is at a point where it is endemic and people need to move on, accept this, and do what they have to to protect themselves and their children, but it should be a

choice. It should not be mandated at this point. She is hopeful the Board will consider those advocating in this direction.

Sarah Jordan Usher, 495 Mile Hill Road, commented that in August 2021 they decided to take the leap with the children. If she was told a few years ago that she would be homeschooling she would have said people were nuts – she has 3 pre-teen boys. They pulled their children because of COVID mandates, not because of COVID itself but because of overreaching mitigation practices that were untested and implemented without research and little case study. She thanked every internet troll who said if one does not like mandates to homeschool. This is what she did and recommends it for everyone. Ms. Usher noted that she 100% does not agree with Ned Lamont, the state of emergency, or how children were used as financial pawns. If this did not become abundantly clear during the last legislative sessions, people need to wake up. She quoted a Democratic State Representative who during the session said, “Why would we leave money on the table?” She continues to question the motive of any mandate with a financial incentive. Ms. Usher commented pro-maskers want everyone to wear a mask – no exception, greater good. Pro-choice want the ability to decide when, where, or if at all. She wants the Board members to forget about masking and think about something they are passionate about and ask if they would prefer their children to be forced to do something they, as parents, did not agree with or have the ability to make their own decision. The mandates have forced children to do something that adults do not want them to do. Politicians, celebrities, and others have been seen at restaurants and sporting events not wearing masks. She commented that children are the last ones left – what are people waiting for? She explained that masks have become comfort objects – items used to provide psychological comfort especially in unusual or unique situations. Ms. Usher commented that if people want their children to wear masks, go ahead, put them in a bubble - she does not care. She wants her kids to have the choice.

Jessica Mead, 11 Eaton Road, commented that she hopes the Board will not vote to put masking in place. She does not believe any Board member, teacher, or principal should have the right to tell a parent what is best for their child’s health. She does not believe kids should be used as shields to protect others or be treated less than what they have for the past 2 years. It should be the parent’s choice – they are legally responsible for their children.

Cristina Melanson, 196 Loehr Road, commented that she has a child in 2nd grade who has dealt with this since the middle of kindergarten. His only experience has been the craziness of COVID, and she attested that it has impacted him dramatically. She has 2 more children who will be going through the schools. Her second child will be 2 in another month and if this does not change, she will be tasked with trying to mask and train a 2-year-old to jump through the hoops as well. Ms. Melanson commented that in terms of the financial piece, everyone has heard that there is ample money coming through the state due to the State of Emergency. The state has \$30M/month in food stamps coming in and \$180M in rent assistance that they do not want to expire so there is a large price tag on keeping this going but she does not think it should be at the expense of the students – the only demographic that still has the ability to be controlled by the mandates of the state. Everyone else has made their own decisions as they are allowed to by the freedoms of the country. The kids are the only demographic left that the state has the ability to say what they have to endure in order to use the public services and Ms. Melanson does not believe this is fair. She hopes the Board considers this. As things move forward and the decisions become harder in the fall, she does not believe they should move back to punishing this demographic, the children, who cannot make the decision for themselves.

Jessica Soucy, 108 Lawlor Road, commented that children are not one size fits all. They do not have cookie cutter needs. Every child is unique. It is the policies that best serve each of their needs. Many families and students struggled greatly over the last few years and their individualized needs have been ignored to support and protect the greater cause. Some students managed and were fortunate enough to get by while others seemed to conquer their daily challenges flawlessly. Everyone is different. Ms. Soucy asked, after the Board reinstates parental choice, what they will do to move forward. What can parents, the Board, and the community do to repair the damage from the mandates. Her 5th grader frequently talks about how she missed her 1st dance with her dad. Eighth graders are being excluded from a school trip with questionable effort on making it work for all students. Every grade level can make a list of ongoing, negative experiences that they have faced. She asked what will be done to repair the damage, make school and trips inclusive, and offer equal opportunities children can look forward to. Ms. Soucy commented that they have the chance to re-offer experiences to some grades and work together to foster positive memories. Tolland can do better than ignoring the damage and she hopes the decisions made tonight will mark the beginning of a new ending of the story and a brighter, more inclusive, future for students.

E. CORRESPONDENCE

- E-mail expressing disappointment that the Board had an executive session during the February 9th meeting between public participation and the other agenda items; author asked Board to hold executive sessions after the regular meeting
- E-mail asking for a statement from the Board or the Superintendent on what the district will do regarding masking if the decision is left to them
- E-mail congratulating the Board for passing the budget but expressing disappointment that the vote was not unanimous
- E-mail making a formal complaint about a district employee allegedly in violation of Policy 4041 regarding social media
- E-mail asking if the Board is still considering having a D.C. field trip for THS students who as 8th graders missed out on the trip due to COVID-19 regulations
- E-mail asking what plans are being made for the Classes of 2024 and 2025 regarding the Washington D.C. trip
- E-mail asking about remaining quarantine requirements for unvaccinated students who are interested in attending a trip to Washington D. C.
- E-mail alleging that some Board members have acted unprofessionally on social media; author believes Board members should remain politically neutral and not express opinions on matters where no vote has been taken
- E-mail asking when a decision will be made about masking in Tolland Public Schools
- E-mail asking the Board to move the last day of school to June 24th regardless of future snow days; author concerned the late end will conflict with vacations and other summer activities
- E-mail asking the Board to consider a range of factors including speech, emotional development, and risk assumed from other viruses when considering putting a local mask mandate in place or letting it expire
- E-mail sharing remote learning standards for the upcoming school year
- E-mails (4) in favor of a mask mandate
- E-mails (6) opposed to a mask mandate

- E-mails (2) asking if Tolland schools will consider putting in place a bus tracking system
- E-mails (6) asking that all students be allowed to attend the Washington D.C. trip regardless of vaccination status

F. POINTS OF INFORMATION

- Ms. Plourd thanked everyone for speaking. She explained that she has been active on social media and has advocated for making masking a choice since August. In October, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children's Hospital Association declared a national emergency in mental health due to the pandemic. She saw the effect her son and others. Initially her son was fine, but he then became more and more withdrawn. While an n of 1, and not a scientific study, this is what she saw. As of now there are no hospitalizations in Tolland County, 2 deaths in the 0-9 age group, and 40 deaths in the 10-19 age group for the entire state. She believes it is time to move forward and stop harming kids – what is best for one may harm another. Ms. Plourd noted that she believes in parental choice and is a registered nurse. She believes in the efficacy of masking when it is a proper mask and needed. They need to do the least amount of harm. She noted that she listened twice to the Shipman and Goodwin webinar (the Board's attorney office) and will forward the replay to the Board. She explained that during the webinar they stated that they are transitioning to routine disease prevention. Rather than a pandemic response, there is a move toward a standard public health approach for management and control of respiratory viral disease similar to influenza. The model includes recommending vaccination, supporting students who choose to wear masks, and testing masking following illness and isolation quarantines. Ms. Plourd noted that she reached out to parents who want to keep masks and their concern for bullying, which the Board needs to recognize could happen, if masks are being worn. Parents may make choices regarding vaccination but there could still be quarantines. Ms. Plourd asked that the Board issue a clear and concise statement that masks will be optional on February 28th and that the Board direct the Superintendent to plan for a second trip the same week as the first trip for the kids who were not allowed to go to Washington D.C. due to their vaccination status rather than a trip with other students at a later date. She added that she would like to revisit the field trip policy and likes the idea of bus tracking.
- Mr. Marie commented that he sympathizes with parents and students who provided testimony. For his last 2 years in college, he learned remotely and knows how it feels to have one's educational experience turned upside down and be robbed of associated experiences. He feels particularly bad for younger kids – a significant portion of their lives has spent in constant, and in many cases unjustified, fear. There needs to be a balance. He noted that he will not vote for a mask mandate or permanent mask policy for the district. It is critical to listen to concerns raised by parents. While people should be allowed to wear masks, and be able to do so without harassment, it is time they allow everyone to assess their own risks and make their own health decisions.
- Ms. Gallichant thanked everyone who spoke tonight. They took time away from their children and families.
- Mr. Regisford commented that he is not currently in school mostly because he was attending mostly online. It was tough and this was his challenge. He noted that they now have all the data and facts, and it is time to make a decision. He thanked everyone for speaking.

- Ms. Lundgren commented on the bus tracking system and confirmed that it would have a cost which would need to be part of the contract. She asked about snow days and expressed concern. Dr. Willett explained that the Board can decide to reduce the number of student school days from the current 182 to 180. He would then bring the request to the bargaining unit. Ms. Lundgren noted that this will be likely be discussed at the next meeting.

G. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT – Nathalie Mitchell and Emily Pereira

- Short videos are being posted in the morning announcements for Black History Month
- Bottle caps are still being collected

Ms. Plourd asked if they had an opinion on masking. The response was that the high school students spoken to believe they are at an age where they should be able to decide.

H. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

H.1 Celebrations (no enclosure)

Dr. Willett noted that on February 3rd, Tolland Fire Marshal Robert DaBica happily informed TIS 4th grader Aarnia Dongare that she was selected as the Tolland County First Place Winner in the Connecticut Fire Marshal's Association Poster Contest for Fire Prevention. This is an annual competition sponsored by the CT Fire Marshal's Association, Office of the State Fire Marshal, and the CT Fire Chief's Association as well as the State Board of Education and the CT FAIR Plan Industry. The contest's theme was "Fire Prevention — Every One/Every Day" and was open to 4th and 5th grade students across CT. County winners' posters will be on display at the State Capitol during Fire Prevention Week in October and included in the 2023 Fire Prevention calendar. Dr. Willett congratulated Aarnia and presented her with a certificate. Everyone is proud of her – she did a great job.

Ms. Lundgren thanked Aarnia and her family for coming tonight. Her family commented that they appreciate all the help and inspiration they have received from teachers.

H.2 Graduation (no enclosure)

June 24, 2022, 6PM, THS Gymnasium

Mr. Poland noted that each senior will receive 8 tickets and presented a photo of the graduation gown. Its colors, blue and white, are a symbol of pride for THS and represents unity in the school community. He explained that one message promoted at the high school is that they are all Eagles. When one enters as a 9th grader, a student is an Eagle just as they are when they graduate. He noted that class officers were on board with the gown selection. Mr. Poland noted that a traditional graduation program will be followed, and they are looking forward to a normal end of year.

Ms. Griffin asked if the June 24th date has been communicated. Mr. Poland responded that tonight is the first time the date is being announced.

Mr. Marie commented that he received a lot of positive feedback about the graduation held at Dunkin Donuts Park and asked if they looked into holding it there again. Dr.

Willett responded that it was held there during the pandemic year, but the cost starts at \$15K. The district has a facility where graduation can be held.

Ms. Plourd asked if students are limited to how many guests they can bring. Mr. Poland responded that each graduate will receive 8 tickets as they have in past normal years.

Mr. Regisford asked if graduates could give unneeded tickets to other families. Mr. Poland responded that it is up to families what they choose to do i.e., swap tickets. The message is 8 guests per graduate due to capacity.

Ms. Gallichant asked if there is a backup plan in case the numbers increase. Dr. Willett responded that in such a scenario they would be directed to limit it to x-number of people and adjustments would be made to the program.

Mr. Regisford asked about the procedure if a graduate is quarantined. Mr. Poland responded that they would accommodate a family as much as possible to ensure they have most valuable experience.

H.3 Masking & Pandemic Considerations (no enclosure)

Dr. Willett explained that as of February 28th the executive orders for mask mandates expire. He noted that the CT State Department of Education and the DPH have the power to reinstitute masking through June 30th. Given the communications he has received, the only situations that would cause this would be a high level of community hospitalizations. Dr. Willett explained that since there will not be a mask mandate, the Board does not have to take action in order for masks to be a choice. The only action a board would have to take is if it wishes to impose a mandate. The Board does not have any pandemic-related policies with respect to masks and thus the Board does not have to rescind any policies.

Dr. Willett noted that there is currently an exception in regard to buses due to a federal transportation requirement. Thus, masks may still need to be worn on school buses. He is awaiting clarification. Dr. Willett added that another exception is regarding those returning from being COVID positive. A person can return on the 6th day after a COVID-positive test if they do not have a fever for 24 hours and have mild symptoms but must wear a mask until day 10.

Dr. Willett noted that the EHHD, as the local health district, if there was classroom spread, could assert a directive to control an outbreak through June 30th.

Ms. Lundgren commented on masking on buses and assumes that this would be for public transportation such as a metro line rather than school buses where students are going to the same school. She asked if they are sure if masking will still be required on school buses. Dr. Willett responded that this is what he has been told but is seeking further clarification and it could change between now and February 28th.

Ms. Plourd commented that Shipman and Goodwin addressed this on the webinar and the firm is looking for more information. Another question posed during the webinar was the right for the EHHD to impose a mandate. The executive orders go through June

30th and conversations need to continue. She noted that EHHD continues to recommend masks, and this makes her fearful that it will undo what the Board does this evening. Ms. Plourd asked if they would return to contact tracing. Dr. Willett responded that they will not but the quarantine for unvaccinated out of school contacts remains.

Ms. Philbin commented that different sources seem to have different information about masking on school buses. She asked what educators will be expected to do. For example, if one family wants their child to wear a mask and another does not, how are educators and staff being held to those requests. Dr. Willett responded that they are not addressing this within a family, but would support each student and staff member's choice.

Ms. Shaikh commented that she believes masks should be optional and are a family preference. There is nothing for the Board to do at this time.

Mr. Marie commented that he feels a bit frustrated with the EHHD in regard to quarantines and unvaccinated students. Regulations like this will cause several problems. He noted that they do not want students who choose to wear masks to be bullied or harassed but quarantines and unvaccinated students will lead to similar issues. He would like the Board to advocate against rules such as those regarding unvaccinated students.

Ms. Griffin commented that as she has said since August it is time for parents to have the choice and unmask students, but she is concerned about the EHHD. Since day 1 of the pandemic the narrative of the EHHD has been people are "going to kill grandma". She worries that the EHHD will send a directive and they need to see if the EHHD can indeed impose a mandate. She feels the EHHD, since the beginning has been overly conservative. Ms. Griffin noted that she is against any mask mandate. She added that she does not believe they can task teachers regarding families' choice on masks. It is between students and their parents. If a family feels strongly that their children need to mask, those students need to follow the family's rules.

Ms. Gallichant commented that the bus situation is confusing and asked if drivers could provide disposable masks. Dr. Willett noted that disposable masks are available on the buses. Ms. Gallichant asked if staff are responsible for enforcing mask-wearing by students returning from quarantine on the 6th day. Dr. Willett responded that the district would follow directives.

Mr. Regisford commented that he is excited to move forward and would like the Board to do so together.

Ms. Philbin noted that she does not believe it would be fair for educators to be tasked with enforcing the verifying if families want their students to wear masks.

Dr. Willett noted that the Board and district has followed all of the rules of the DPH and EHHD. The rules will no longer require masking and it makes sense to follow this at this time. Masks will be a choice as of February 28th.

Ms. Lungren asked about staff and masks. Dr. Willett responded that they have choice as well. He noted that compassion is always needed. Some students will still need to wear a mask including those returning from quarantine.

Ms. Plourd asked that Dr. Willett put out a clear and concise statement that the Board did not vote to implement a mask mandate and masks will be optional as of February 28th throughout the district unless otherwise directed. Dr. Willett will include this on the bulletin and make a separate communication with the information as well.

H.4 Washington DC (no enclosure)

Dr. Willett reviewed H.4 from the October 13th BOE meeting.

He explained that his understanding is that students cannot be added at this time. He added that the most significant consideration noted on October 13th has not changed - those who are unvaccinated and symptomatic need to be tested or presumed positive and quarantine, and the quarantine is in force for unvaccinated close contacts of a positive person outside of school, regardless of symptoms. Thus, there is the potential for the trip to be horrible for those quarantined. Additionally, space and staff would need to be dedicated to a quarantine situation. He cited that unvaccinated students in an out-of-school context who are in close contact to a Covid positive person need to quarantine for 10 days. If a person is COVID-positive, an unvaccinated student sitting next to them would be quarantined and out of the trip, whereas a vaccinated student showing no symptoms would not be subject to quarantine. He added that some of the other items listed on H.4, including venues being able to make their own decisions, are still in play. They are planning to have another trip next year at THS that will provide more options and not have the constraints listed.

Ms. Lundgren noted that she understands the logistics of adding to the planned trip and asked if fundraising would be available for the fall trip. Dr. Willett responded that they would find a model that works. The trip could be in November, offer everything and potentially more than the currently planned trip, be cost effective, and not have the potential constraints and issues.

Mr. Regisford confirmed that there will be another trip at the high school level that would be open to all students. Dr. Willett explained that as restrictions are lifted there will be more freedom to restructure the trip and an opportunity for all students to participate without the conditions in force right now. Mr. Regisford expressed concern about students being broken down into groups that are not classmates. Dr. Willett explained that students are broken down into quads from a rooming perspective but also interact with the larger group.

Ms. Griffin explained that her biggest issue is that decisions are being based on what might happen. The biggest obstacle in October was the vaccine mandate which is now being lifted. While she understands a future trip is being planned, it does not help students today. The 8th graders want to go with their friends – the friends of students who do not go on this trip may not be able to go on the next one. Ms. Griffin commented that they are not looking at what this is doing to students who cannot go. She understands there would be obstacles if vaccines mandates are reinstated but they

have received many e-mails from parents who are willing to take the chance and help (chaperone etc.). Unvaccinated and vaccinated students can both get COVID. She would like to have the planned trip researched to see if all students can participate. Ms. Griffin asked if the students are tested daily. Dr. Willett responded that it is based on if a student is showing symptoms. He explained that it is not about the vaccination but about the mandatory unvaccinated quarantine. Further, businesses can still choose the requirements and things can still turn in direction. Additionally, they have asked the company about the timeline. Dr. Willett noted that as always, the trip will make accommodations for those with a documented medical need. In terms of adding chaperones, there would be a cost and logistics would need to be addressed. Funds would be wasted if one has to quarantine. Dr. Willett explained that while he does not want it to be this way, the pandemic has created conditions imposed which must be considered. Ms. Griffin explained that it seems that families are willing to take the risks including the monetary ones. Dr. Willett responded that the logistics considerations at this time do not support this course of action over an alternative trip. While they may be willing to take the risk, it could impact others negatively. Ms. Griffin asked how other districts are addressing this. Dr. Willett responded that some have cancelled or may be doing something different, but it does not change the quarantine requirement or conditions taken into consideration for the trip, or the timeline of the planning.

Ms. Plourd commented that she should have fought this in October. She has spoken to a friend and the mandates have been lifted in Washington D.C. and vaccination cards do not need to be shown. If one stays in VA, they do not have to test since they are going into the city for less than 24 hours. The only time students would test is if symptomatic. Parents have communicated that they would volunteer. Ms. Plourd believes the travel company, if they cannot add to this trip could plan another for the same week. The students want to go with their friends. She feels that if all the students cannot go then none should go and noted that it is "wildly unfair". It sets people up for disappointment and exclusion. While not legally discrimination, she feels it is discrimination. Ms. Plourd asked that the Board to direct the Superintendent to allow the students to go on the trip.

Ms. Lundgren believes that there are logistics issues as well as economic considerations given the cost. Dr. Willett explained that a timeline needs to be followed to plan such a trip. Ms. Lundgren reviewed a timeline for a fall trip including discussion in the fall and fundraising as well as planning to add another trip (busses, restaurants etc.) for May 3rd. She does not believe the latter can be done but supports planning a fall trip so all students can have the opportunity.

Mr. Marie commented that he sees the mandate regarding quarantines as the biggest challenge and confirmed that it was set by the DPH and is still in place. He would like to research what other districts are doing but it is the 8th grade trip, and he would the Board to be receptive to the concerns and investigate if it can happen.

Ms. Philbin noted that it is a tough situation. They need to get creative and continue the conversation so they can be as inclusive as possible to give students the opportunity to have the experience. It is ever evolving, and they do not know what the future quarantine requirements will be. The timeline for this trip would be compressed.

Ms. Gallichant commented that it is difficult, and she feels for all involved. Her son was in the 8th grade last year and did not go on the trip and her son in the 5th grade did not go on the trip to Boston. A lot of children have lost things and her heart breaks for those students who cannot go. She asked if parents could bring their children and assume the transportation and lodging. Would those children be able to participate in the activities? That said, what about others who are vaccinated, exposed, and quarantined? Will the district be asked to issue a refund or are there legal ramifications? Ms. Lundgren noted that another town cancelled a trip and parents got together and took their kids. The school provided fundraising opportunities. Dr. Willett explained that families have flexibility that the district does not.

Ms. Plourd asked for a directive to research to see what can be done in regard to the trip. She believes other districts have waivers where if a student tests positive for COVID that the parent will immediately pick them up. Dr. Willett explained that even if a waiver is signed, it is seven hours or more to D.C. and the factor regarding the interactions that could happen between people who are frustrated and the quarantine dynamic needs to be considered. He noted that he will happily do whatever the Board directs but it is about what can be executed and creating a situation where students can have the entire experience without the potential for disruption due to conditions and restrictions.

Ms. Shaikh commented that they need to hear from those spearheading the trip. Dr. Willett is not going on the trip, coordinating the trip, or would be the one responsible if someone needs to quarantine. She cannot imagine coordinating a trip with this number of children and adding the quarantine component. Logistically, she is how unsure it would work. Dr. Willett clarified that he is assisting in every way that he can but does not believe it would be appropriate to put those planning the trip before the Board in public session on this matter. It would be asking too much of the trip organizers to answer for what the conditions and restrictions have created. If there is any blame or vitriol it should fall on him. Dr. Willett noted that he supports every aspect of what was done and why. The reasoning behind the decision was to try to prevent people from having a miserable experience given the potential issues with the requirements in place. In terms of the timeline, they are 2 months away from the trip and it takes 5 months to get to this point. Ms. Shaikh noted that she is not directing anger toward Dr. Willett or others. There are many ins and outs, which Board members do not understand, to planning a trip such as thus she does not feel she can weigh in on this.

Mr. Regisford commented that he wants everyone who wants to go on the trip to be able to do so. While it may not be this year, he would like to make it happen for next year. Ms. Lundgren noted that she does not think it would be feasible logistically to make things happen in 2 months. A fall trip would give students an opportunity to go who did not have a chance.

Ms. Griffin noted that she would still like Destinations Unlimited, the trip planner, to be contacted. She has the 2019 itinerary, and it is identical to the one being planned other than the hotel. She would like to ask the ramifications of adding 40-50 students to the planned trip, if it can be done, and if so, discuss what would be needed to make it

happen. Dr. Willett responded that they have had direct communication with the company, but he can request more information from them. He noted that parents could run their own trip separately but noted that interfacing on a trip like this given they cannot ride the busses, or engage in certain aspects of the trip, and this could be frustrating for a family with different schedules, transportation, and admissions.

Mr. Regisford commented that if 50 students are added and 4 students are in each room, then 12.5 rooms are needed. If the majority of the hotel is booked, he does not believe they would have enough rooms in which case neighboring hotels would need to be considered. The Board cannot determine anything tonight until there is more information. He recommended investigating the options.

Ms. Plourd quoted, "Establishment women get angry, activists change the laws." She noted that she requested that Policy 5150 be added to the agenda. It is on the tracker.

Mr. Marie reiterated that he would like to look into the options and see what other towns are doing. If it cannot happen in the spring, they need to plan a backup trip better than traditional trips and incorporate student ideas. Dr. Willett responded that they would be fully capable of planning a fantastic THS trip and would like the energy to be focused on doing so. He added that while policies can be rewritten, Policy 5150 does not have the requirement regarding unvaccinated students and quarantines – it is a DPH requirement.

H.5 Joint Town Council/BOE Discussion (no enclosure)
February 24th, Library Program Room, Hybrid

Ms. Lundgren noted that Dr. Willett provided the Board's Q&A to the Town Council this weekend for review prior to the meeting.

Ms. Griffin reviewed the Board of Education – Budget Summary Information – 2022-2023 Budget; FY23 BOE Proposed Budget graph and highlights.

Ms. Griffin noted that they will also review with the Council that funds will be used from the ERF. Mr. Marie noted that the graph shows how much of the budget increase is contractual.

Ms. Plourd commented that she likes the waterfall graph presentation and confirmed that the Council received the FAQ document.

Ms. Philbin noted that in FFC they also discussed adding information on technology and the 5-year plan to the document.

I. COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

- Finance & Facilities – met today; topics discussed included: appendix f & audit report
Ms. Griffin provided an update regarding the Town Council Capital Budget Public Hearing.
- Policy – met today; topics discussed included: visitors in schools; volunteers; transportation; bus cameras

- Communications – no meeting; PTO update provided
- Tolland Mental Health and Substance Use Advisory Task Force – topics discussed included: youth center recommendation to the Council; Chair writing a letter advocating for the Skills for Adolescent position in the Board's budget

J. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Ms. Lundgren noted it is nice to have a room full of people. She would like to have students' artwork on the back wall of Council Chambers and thanked everyone for participating and speaking.

K. BOARD ACTION - none

L. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Shay Belair, 185 Kozley Road, thanked the Board members who responded to her e-mail and for advocating for all students to be eligible for the D.C. trip. She asked that the Board revisit H.4, the overnight field trip policy. Excluding a population based on vaccination status is exclusionary at best and an unfair practice that is in writing that she respectfully asked be revisited and taken off. It goes against everything public education stands for. When there is a field trip of any type, all students should be eligible and able to go. Every effort should be made to make it happen. Students are being excluded from the trip who she thinks should be able to go. Ms. Belair advocated for families whose children cannot go because of their vaccination status to still take their kids on the trip to D.C. as a group. While they cannot attend everything with their friends, classmates, and peers there are opportunities at venues where they will be able to interact. This would still be a positive outcome even if they do not have the full experience.

Adam Belair, 185 Kozley Road, commented that parents have volunteered to try to make the trip work from the beginning. He respects the decision in October but believes it is wrong to exclude any compromise. In the past he understands field trips were inclusive and allowed students with behavioral problems to go along with their parents. He believes the estimate of 40-50 kids is too high and that it is likely 10-20 kids for a 5-10% boost. Mr. Belair asked if Dr. Willett has spoken with the travel company recently. Dr. Willett responded that his understanding is that they were asked directly and recently. Ms. Lundgren noted that back and forth communication does not take place under this agenda item. Mr. Belair asked about the plan if vaccinated students develop the flu or a stomach virus. The Board is concerned about kids being picked on if they continue to wear masks but what about his kid who is not going on the trip? There are no concerns for that? He asked about a hybrid trip where he would take his kid to D.C. and maybe he could travel on the bus with others and the travel agency has extra tickets so he can go with the group. Mr. Belair commented that he will take his kid to D.C. no matter what and he will go to all of the public events with the other students. He added that he will take as many families as he can and get a group together.

Shannon Jubert, 816 Tolland Stage Road, commented that she moved to Tolland 2 years ago and has struggled socially in finding friends for her children and becoming part of the community. A lot of it has to do with masks. When people cannot see another smile, they cannot interact in quite the same way. She also has an 8th grader and is disappointed in the decision to leave out the unvaccinated kids because the decision does not come easily for families. They are dealing with a lot being unvaccinated and she has a vaccine injured child, so they made the decision not

to be vaccinated and now her 8th grader is paying the price. It was mentioned showing compassion toward children who will be wearing masks, but she does not believe any compassion was shown when the trip was planned for the unvaccinated children. Ms. Jubert thinks it is discriminatory and wishes things were thought through better earlier on. She understands that 2 months is a time crunch. She is thankful several Board members have decided to rethink this and try – it means a lot to her 8th grader.

M. POINTS OF INFORMATION

- Tolland Town Council – February 8, 2022
- Tolland Town Council – Special meeting – February 10, 2022
- Dr. Willett commented that the situation is different from a student sick with the flu or stomach virus because in that case that student may be out of the trip but there are not conditions and requirements in that case impacting the students around them. In the case of Covid, any unvaccinated individuals in close contact with a covid positive or presumed positive individual are out, must quarantine, regardless of how they feel physically. If the vaccinated student is a close contact, they can continue on the trip, and unvaccinated student cannot – and unvaccinated students are 2 to 3 time more likely to be impacted this way. It is not about the vaccination as much as it is about the rule regarding those who are unvaccinated, and he believes it would be an awful situation for families. Dr. Willett noted that there were rules in place when the trip was originally planned, and many of those rules are in place now. The heart was in it to make the trip happen in the best way possible that was available at the time. He would like to run a fantastic trip next year that would not have any of these issues. Dr. Willett added that he feels it would be very frustrating for people to try to go on the trip. Busses will be going in different directions and for security reasons they cannot allow groups to intermingle. He apologized for how this has happened but does not feel that conditions are different.
- Ms. Gallichant commented that with masks coming off they discussed ensuring there is not any bullying of those who decide to continue to wear a mask. There are also children who will not wear a mask who have become used to wearing a mask. She asked if they could ask teachers to reach out to those students. Ms. Gallichant noted that staff will also be in a new position next week as well and she hopes the administration checks in on them as well. They have been careful about talking about health and mental health, but the school is their community, and she wants to ensure they are reaching out and checking in even though the assumption is they are great because the masks are off. Dr. Willett agreed.

N. FUTURE - none

O. NEW BUSINESS - none

P. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Marie motioned to adjourn at 9:38 PM.

Mr. Regisford seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

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Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Pascuzzi
Clerk



TOLLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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860-870-6850 • FAX: 860-870-7737

OFFICE OF THE
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Walter Willett, Ph.D.
Superintendent

TO: Board of Education

H.1

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

RE: Monthly Financial Report for February 2022

Date: March 2, 2022

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

Please find the attached financial report for the FY 2021-2022 fiscal year. The month of February 2022 is the 8th month of the 2021-2022 fiscal year. The monthly financials for this school year are atypical as the district contends with the COVID pandemic. The attached report is only a temporary financial snapshot identifying eight months of activity, and the balance does reflect the first expected excess cost grant payments from the State of Connecticut. The 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.

The attached February 2022 financial report shows a current available balance of \$59,469 or .15% of the BOE's current budget. As previously stated, these amounts, encumbrances and balances will change over the next several months. This year the district has faced increased incurrence of special education accountabilities earlier in the fiscal year. This balance reflects the impact of special education transportation and special education tuitions. During the month of February 2022, the SDE distributed the excess cost payment. TPS received \$651,422 from the excess cost payment, which was applied to the special education lines to help balance the overall budget. This amount is the first of 2 payments. The second payment will be smaller, and the final amount depends upon the expenses which other districts have filed with the SDE.

Health Insurances can continue to be booked as staff are hired, vacancies are filled. Substitute expenses started in September, special education student tuitions will continue to be incurred, transportation routes can be adjusted and have not been fully booked, 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.

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 FY21-22 was Town Council approved for \$40,819,289. The BOE is anticipating spending the allocated budget by year-end in accordance with CGS 10-222. As in the past, any balances may be returned to the town or the BOE will request to transfer the balance to the Educational Reserve Fund after final approval.

Tolland Public Schools

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

From Date: 7/1/2021

To Date: 2/28/2022

Fiscal Year: 2021-2022

☐ 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	\$23,366,979.52	\$13,767,722.63	\$13,767,722.63	\$9,599,256.89	\$9,760,210.17	(\$160,953.28)	-0.69%
0100.0000.120.00.000.1	Substitutes	\$367,228.00	\$193,393.05	\$193,393.05	\$173,834.95	\$28,350.00	\$145,484.95	39.62%
0100.0000.130.00.000.1	Overtime	\$218,871.00	\$162,871.33	\$162,871.33	\$55,999.67	\$1,457.28	\$54,542.39	24.92%
0100.0000.150.00.000.1	Stipends	\$394,028.03	\$184,903.04	\$184,903.04	\$209,124.99	\$277,181.96	(\$68,056.97)	-17.27%
0100.0000.190.00.000.1	Pension/Severance	\$160,374.00	\$10,484.92	\$10,484.92	\$149,889.08	\$0.00	\$149,889.08	93.46%
0100.0000.200.00.000.1	Employee Benefits	\$513,000.00	\$482,581.12	\$482,581.12	\$30,418.88	\$4,774.23	\$25,644.65	5.00%
0100.0000.210.00.000.1	Health/Life/Disabl Ins	\$5,303,181.00	\$3,625,973.36	\$3,625,973.36	\$1,677,207.64	\$1,653,800.86	\$23,406.78	0.44%
0100.0000.220.00.000.1	FICA/MED/Soc Sec	\$729,822.57	\$412,109.64	\$412,109.64	\$317,712.93	\$257,766.63	\$59,946.30	8.21%
0100.0000.240.00.000.1	Retirement (ICMA)	\$258,273.09	\$163,261.89	\$163,261.89	\$95,011.20	\$87,596.43	\$7,414.77	2.87%
0100.0000.250.00.000.1	Course Reimbursement-Degree Ch	\$50,000.00	\$17,508.00	\$17,508.00	\$32,492.00	\$0.00	\$32,492.00	64.98%
0100.0000.260.00.000.1	Unemployment Compensation	\$56,471.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$56,471.00	\$12,500.00	\$43,971.00	77.86%
0100.0000.270.00.000.1	Workers' Compensation	\$278,892.00	\$202,315.80	\$202,315.80	\$76,576.20	\$67,440.12	\$9,136.08	3.28%
0100.0000.300.00.000.1	Purch Prof & Tech Svcs	\$57,788.41	\$30,514.67	\$30,514.67	\$27,273.74	\$1,000.00	\$26,273.74	45.47%
0100.0000.310.00.000.1	Benefits Consultant Services	\$65,280.00	\$27,300.00	\$27,300.00	\$37,980.00	\$27,300.00	\$10,680.00	16.36%
0100.0000.320.00.000.1	Prof Educ Svcs	\$305,191.00	\$298,197.06	\$298,197.06	\$6,993.94	\$178,941.76	(\$171,947.82)	-56.34%
0100.0000.330.00.000.1	Professional Tech Svcs	\$34,482.00	\$8,976.14	\$8,976.14	\$25,505.86	\$7,997.60	\$17,508.26	50.78%
0100.0000.340.00.000.1	Legal/Audit/Consult Svcs	\$213,145.00	\$142,587.01	\$142,587.01	\$70,557.99	\$80,493.76	(\$9,935.77)	-4.66%
0100.0000.350.00.000.1	Tech Services	\$530,180.72	\$367,435.59	\$367,435.59	\$162,745.13	\$126,482.31	\$36,262.82	6.84%
0100.0000.410.00.000.1	Sewer/Water	\$35,465.00	\$35,307.00	\$35,307.00	\$158.00	\$0.00	\$158.00	0.45%
0100.0000.420.00.000.1	Cleaning/Rubbish Services	\$136,558.00	\$77,113.47	\$77,113.47	\$59,444.53	\$63,763.94	(\$4,319.41)	-3.16%
0100.0000.430.00.000.1	Repair and Maint Svcs (Facili	\$251,990.00	\$84,411.71	\$84,411.71	\$167,578.29	\$30,626.73	\$136,951.56	54.35%
0100.0000.440.00.000.1	Rentals	\$172,885.00	\$109,705.59	\$109,705.59	\$63,179.41	\$52,134.88	\$11,044.53	6.39%
0100.0000.510.00.000.1	Student Transp Svcs	\$2,621,994.00	\$1,180,688.76	\$1,180,688.76	\$1,441,305.24	\$1,674,608.04	(\$233,302.80)	-8.90%
0100.0000.520.00.000.1	Property/Liability Insurance	\$233,202.00	\$169,757.50	\$169,757.50	\$63,444.50	\$45,350.00	\$18,094.50	7.76%
0100.0000.530.00.000.1	Telephone/ Postage	\$84,788.00	\$49,339.54	\$49,339.54	\$35,448.46	\$35,115.28	\$333.18	0.39%
0100.0000.540.00.000.1	Advertising	\$26,500.00	\$13,135.90	\$13,135.90	\$13,364.10	\$10,728.10	\$2,636.00	9.95%
0100.0000.550.00.000.1	Printing and Binding	\$19,947.00	\$8,351.12	\$8,351.12	\$11,595.88	\$1,230.18	\$10,365.70	51.97%
0100.0000.560.00.000.1	Tuition Educ Agency	\$1,601,733.00	\$1,228,014.86	\$1,228,014.86	\$373,718.14	\$772,525.05	(\$398,806.91)	-24.90%
0100.0000.580.00.000.1	Travel and Conference	\$30,675.00	\$10,922.02	\$10,922.02	\$19,752.98	\$2,113.42	\$17,639.56	57.50%
0100.0000.590.00.000.1	Public Officers & State Troope	\$91,994.00	\$33,806.41	\$33,806.41	\$58,187.59	\$9,562.45	\$48,625.14	52.86%
0100.0000.600.00.000.1	General Supplies	\$165,553.00	\$84,044.00	\$84,044.00	\$81,509.00	\$47,976.07	\$33,532.93	20.26%
0100.0000.610.00.000.1	Instr Supplies/Mat'ls	\$276,312.88	\$172,744.07	\$172,744.07	\$103,568.81	\$38,353.53	\$65,215.28	23.60%
0100.0000.620.00.000.1	Energy	\$1,672,270.00	\$1,562,747.74	\$1,562,747.74	\$109,522.26	\$112,991.09	(\$3,468.83)	-0.21%
0100.0000.640.00.000.1	Textbooks	\$189,074.62	\$143,182.86	\$143,182.86	\$45,891.76	\$7,846.41	\$38,045.35	20.12%
0100.0000.650.00.000.1	Films and Videos Supl	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00	0.00%
0100.0000.660.00.000.1	Computer Software	\$48,794.24	\$49,271.29	\$49,271.29	(\$477.05)	\$0.00	(\$477.05)	-0.98%
0100.0000.690.00.000.1	Misc Supplies	\$56,478.21	\$19,416.54	\$19,416.54	\$37,061.67	\$14,742.44	\$22,319.23	39.52%
0100.0000.730.00.000.1	Equip Instruct - New	\$136,640.89	\$26,908.05	\$26,908.05	\$109,732.84	\$55,122.00	\$54,610.84	39.97%
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	\$61,897.00	\$48,359.75	\$48,359.75	\$13,537.25	\$4,517.00	\$9,020.25	14.57%
0100.0000.890.00.000.1	Misc Expense	\$0.00	\$1,356.60	\$1,356.60	(\$1,356.60)	\$0.00	(\$1,356.60)	0.00%
Grand Total:		\$40,819,289.18	\$25,206,720.03	\$25,206,720.03	\$15,612,569.15	\$15,553,099.72	\$59,469.43	0.15%

End of Report

Agenda Item #H.2

SUPERINTENDENT'S AGENDA ITEM BACKGROUND

ITEM: Shortening school year from 182 to 180 days

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

FOR BOE MEETING: March 9, 2022

ITEM SUMMARY:

Currently, due to weather related school closures, the last day of school is June 27, 2022. This item is offered to the Board for consideration as any additional cancellations will continue to push back the end of the school year. The school year cannot legally extend beyond June 30.

CGS 10-15 defines a 180-day minimum school year and Tolland Public Schools currently extends to 182 student days. By reducing the TPS 2021-2022 school year to 180 days, the 2021-2022 school year can end two days sooner.

All bargaining units work days as identified in their contract.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY:

BOE ACTION DESIRED:

Potential Motion:

Motion to reduce the Tolland Public School student school year for 2021-2022 from 182 days to 180 days. Second. Discussion. Vote.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS ATTACHED:

None

SUPERINTENDENT'S AGENDA ITEM BACKGROUND

ITEM: Review - Making a Difference Curriculum

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

FOR BOE MEETING: March 9, 2022

ITEM SUMMARY:

Second-grade students will engage in the study of how people both past and present have made a difference in their community, country, and world as well as exploring how and what we decide to remember about the past. This interdisciplinary study incorporates history, civics, economics, and geography and requires that students generate and research compelling questions such as:

- How can people make a difference in society?
- How do both individuals and groups of people make a difference in our town, state, country, and world?
- How do things in the past connect to what happens today?

Expectations:

- It is expected that elementary school students will explore history, geography, civics, and economics through multiple perspectives and viewpoints.
- It is expected that elementary students will use a variety of sources to engage in activities that promote the development of research, reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills as part of the inquiry cycle.
- It is expected that elementary students will explore principles of democracy and methods of participation in society.

Themes	Content
Perspectives and Diversity in our World <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examine how different forms of cultural expression are used to influence and change society, including art, literature, music, film, dance, and other forms of fine and performing arts. Democratic Principles and Values <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify key American democratic principles and values such as liberty, freedom, justice, and equality.• Explore how American democratic principles and values influence how and why people make a difference in society.	People and Groups Who Make a Difference in Society <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify how the beliefs and actions of people and groups have made a difference through their commitment to the democratic values of equality, justice, individual rights, and the common good.• Explore the different methods used by individuals and groups to address problems in school (e.g., join clubs, vote, communicate with peers, present at meetings) and in the community (e.g., vote, write letters, march, join organizations, donate money, teach, protest). Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens in Society <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examine the lives of people who have promoted the common good including issues of equality, justice, and the rights of the individual.• Explore different ways students can make a difference in their community.

<p>Using Evidence to Learn About the Past</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify different types of sources of information about individuals and groups who made a difference in society. <p>Connecting the Past and Today</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore connections between the actions of people and groups in the past and the possible influence on today. • Analyze how the types of actions of people and groups in the past are similar to, and different from, actions taken today. 	<p>How and what we remember about the past</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify different types of sources of information about individuals and groups who made a difference in society. • Analyze how people and groups in the present are influenced by the actions and beliefs of people and groups in the past.
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BOE ACTION DESIRED:

This information is presented for the Board of Education for review.

If the BOE takes no action to oppose this implementation it will move forward as planned for March implementation. The board can also make a motion to adopt in which case such motion could read as follows:

Motion to adopt the Making a Difference Curriculum for Grade 2 for implementation starting March of 2022.
Second. Discussion. Vote.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS ATTACHED:

Making A difference Overview

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sJ1g-Hxpg2tK53DxlaXGJNM1Cfji4Zkr/view?usp=sharing>

Making a Difference Synopsis

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1byCiC5jh2iwYy8dA4PNP5MHPPr-qcfs7k/view?usp=sharing>

MINUTES

TOLLAND TOWN COUNCIL ZOOM ONLY MEETING February 22, 2022 – 7:00 P.M.

Members Present: Steve Jones, Chair; John Reagan, Vice Chair; Sami Khan, Lou Luba, Katie Murray, Tammy Nuccio, Colleen Yudichak

Members Absent: none

Also Present: Lisa Hancock, Interim Town Manager; Mike Wilkinson, Director of Administrative Services

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:06PM.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Recited
3. **MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Observed
4. **PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS:**
 - 4.1 Proclamation Request Recognizing March as Women's History Month
Mr. Jones presented a draft for review by the Council.
Ms. Murray commented that the language was taken from the U.S. Congressional yearly proclamation for Women's History Month.

Ms. Murray motioned to approve the Proclamation be published and presented for March for Women's History Month.
Ms. Nuccio seconded the motion.
Discussion: none
A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.
5. **PUBLIC PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** (*on any subject within the jurisdiction of the Town Council*) (2-minute limit)
Christina Plourd, 101 Metcalf Road, requested that Lou Luba be added back to the Birch Grove Building Committee.
6. **PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS:** none
- 7a. **REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES RESPONSIBLE TO THE COUNCIL:**
 - Birch Grove Building Committee – next meeting March 1st, 6:30PM
- 7b. **REPORTS OF TOWN COUNCIL LIAISONS**
 - Historic District Commission – Ms. Murray provided an update of the February 16th meeting.
 - WPCA – Mr. Reagan provided an update of the February 15th meeting.
 - Planning & Zoning Commission – Mr. Luba provided an update.
 - Veterans Recognition Commission – Mr. Luba provided an update.
 - Eastern Highlands Health District – Ms. Nuccio provided an update.
 - Permanent Celebration Committee – will be rescheduled
 - Board of Education – Ms. Yudichak provided an update of the February 9th meeting.
 - Recreation Advisory Board – no meeting
 - Mental Health and Substance Use Advisory Task Force – Ms. Yudichak provided an update.
 - Commission on People with Disabilities – Ms. Yudichak provided an update of the February 17th meeting.

- ARPA Subcommittee – Next meeting February 24th
- Conservation Commission – Mr. Jones referred to the minutes. Next meeting February 24th

8. NEW BUSINESS (ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS):

8.1 Consideration of a resolution for Town Council to return to Hybrid public meetings.

Ms. Hancock reviewed the background information for this item.

She noted that the number of COVID cases have come down in Tolland.

Ms. Murray commented that the Council went to remote meetings in January at the recommendation of Ms. Hancock and asked what she recommended as this time. Ms. Hancock responded that she is comfortable going back to hybrid meetings and does not believe the impact from COVID on Town Hall offices will be as bad as she believed it may have been headed previously. She supports returning to hybrid meetings.

Ms. Yudichak commented that it is reasonable to return to hybrid meetings. The Council has received e-mails regarding lifting the mask requirement in municipal buildings and asked if the mask requirement in municipal buildings will be lifted prior to February 28th when people have a choice regarding wearing masks. Ms. Hancock responded that she was going to wait until February 28th to lift the mask requirement unless there is a strong desire by the majority of the Council to do so tomorrow.

Mr. Jones noted that this evening's resolution is only in regard to returning to hybrid meetings. A discussion regarding masking in municipal buildings would be a different topic. He noted that ultimately it is at the discretion of the Town Manager.

Ms. Nuccio commented that she supports returning to hybrid meetings and lifting the mask mandate. She believes that as of February 15th the executive order for town managers to make the decision regarding masking may have expired.

Mr. Jones noted that he is in favor of returning to hybrid meetings. Hybrid meetings have worked well for the past several months and it will be a good opportunity, as they hold budget meetings, for people to participate remotely if they choose to do so while meetings are held in Council Chambers and the Library Program Room.

Mr. Luba motioned:

BE IT RESOLVED by the Tolland Town Council that it hereby approves conducting Hybrid public meetings beginning February 23, 2022.

Ms. Nuccio seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

8.2 Appointments to vacancies on various municipal boards/commissions

Mr. Jones wished Catherine McDonald well. She has stepped back from the Tolland Mental Health & Substance Use Task Force as an alternate.

Mr. Luba noted that many people have come forth to volunteer for the Commission on People with Disabilities and thanked them for stepping forward. Mr. Luba and Mr. Khan are working through the proper process.

9. OLD BUSINESS (ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS): none

10. REPORT OF THE INTERIM TOWN MANAGER

- Ms. Hancock noted that they are working on the budget process but are having challenges with meeting the deadline because the grand list is needed before final decisions can be made. She noted that the expenditure budget is complete and recommended that the Veterans Recognition Commission bring its request forward to the Council. The deadline for boards and commissions to present requests was at the end of January. Mr. Luba will communicate this to the Commission.
- The Town Manager's Office is working on ARPA items so information may be provided to the Committee.

Ms. Nuccio commented in regard to the budget and discussions by the Historic District Commission. She believed that the Commission worked on a grant about 5 years ago to address the porches, windows, and ADA ramp at the Old Tolland County Jail and Museum but that it did not go through. Ms. Nuccio spoke with someone from the Commission who noted that there is concern that it is beyond repairable. She added that this is not in the capital plan but during the last Town Manager's report they reviewed the financials and the opportunity for funding given increased revenues received by the Town. Ms. Nuccio asked if the Veterans Recognition Commission or, more specifically, the work that needs to be done on the museum could be added to the capital plan. She is concerned that this has lingered for so long but believes the windows have been addressed. While the Commission recently received an \$11,300 grant, it cannot be used for infrastructure. Ms. Hancock will research this and noted that the request could be presented to the Council for a supplemental appropriation. Additionally, she recommended that the Veterans Recognition Commission consider if what is needed can be done this year.

Ms. Nuccio asked if Ms. Hancock anticipates the grand list will grow this year given that several homes with crumbling foundations have been returned and given the rate of inflation. Ms. Hancock responded that she is looking at this but noted that the increase has been due to motor vehicles rather than real estate. She noted that the Governor has made a recommendation to cap the motor vehicle mill rate at 29 mills. An estimate of how much would be lost by the town if this happens was provided but Ms. Hancock expressed concern with the calculation. She explained that if the mill rate on motor vehicles is reduced to 29 mills, there will be an impact on the residential and personal property mill rates to make up the difference. Once she has the numbers more information can be presented.

Mr. Khan asked if it is better for the mill rate to increase or the property values. Ms. Hancock responded that the impact is based on the individual. If someone has the standardized mill rate on their car and is renting a property, they are living in a community where they are not paying for services albeit the landlord is doing so via the property tax and will pay more if the vehicle mill rate is reduced to 29. If the town is not made whole on the difference between the 29 mills and the current 37.11 mills, residential

and personal property owners will need to cover the gap. Thus, depending on the value of one's car and property, one will either save money or pay more.

11. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- 11.1 February 8, 2022 Remote Meeting Minutes
- 11.2 February 10, 2022 Remote Special Meeting Minutes

Mr. Luba motioned to approve the minutes as laid out in 11.1 and 11.2.

Ms. Yudichak seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

12. CORRESPONDENCE TO COUNCIL

- E-mails (6) – regarding mask mandates
- E-mail – regarding shared software between the Town and the BOE
- E-mail – regarding solar energy

13. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

- Mr. Jones encouraged everyone to attend and participate in the Thursday, February 24th, joint Council/BOE meeting.
- The town manager search is about halfway through the application period.
- Upcoming budget meetings: March 16th, 17th, and 21st in the Library Program Room
- Additional meetings: Public Hearing (budget), March 24th; final budget discussion: March 29th; joint meeting with the Water Commission: March 7th (tentative date); joint meeting with the EDC and the PZC, March 31st (tentative date)

14. COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS FROM COUNCILPERSONS

- Mr. Luba petitioned that Ms. Hancock consider lifting the mask mandate as soon as possible. It is called for at this point and enough communications have been received from residents. Mr. Luba asked for direction regarding the vacancy on the Birch Grove Building Committee. He would like to be allowed to take this position so he can follow it through to the end. Mr. Jones noted that since vacancies would normally go through Mr. Luba and Mr. Khan, they will research the process.
- Ms. Nuccio seconded Mr. Luba's request for removal of the mask mandate and she would like a review of removing the public health emergency. Ms. Nuccio requested that next year a budget meeting not be scheduled on St. Patrick's Day.
- Ms. Yudichak noted that when she reported on the ARPA Subcommittee she used the term "issues" when she meant "suggestions and ideas". Ms. Yudichak believes they should be ready to lift the mask requirement.
- Ms. Murray thanked Mr. Jones for summarizing the status of the town manager search. She would like to review Ordinance 60. Mr. Jones responded that Ordinance 60 is scheduled to be discussed at the Council's second meeting in March. He gave kudos to Mr. Wilkinson who has been working with SGR and tracking applications received for the town manager position.
- Mr. Reagan noted that he advocates for the removal of the mask mandate. He believes this can be done safely and hybrid meetings are still available if people are uncomfortable attending in person.
- Mr. Khan commented that he is in favor of lifting the mask mandate.

- Mr. Jones noted that while he is not giving direction to Ms. Hancock, he is comfortable with lifting the mask mandate on February 28th or sooner as long as it can be effectively communicated with town staff. Ms. Hancock responded that she would think about it overnight and tomorrow morning. She added that it would be nice to lift it given Thursday's joint meeting and the limitations with the Owl camera. It can be difficult for people to hear speakers when they are wearing a mask although attendees may still wear a mask if they wish. She will make a decision and let the Council know.

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

Christina Plourd, 101 Metcalf Rd, commented that her e-mails advocating unmasking elected officials have been listened to and she thanked the Council members for their advocacy. She thanked Ms. Hancock for her consideration.

16. **ADJOURNMENT**

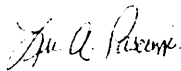
Mr. Luba motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 PM:

Ms. Nuccio seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Pascuzzi
Town Council Clerk

Town Council Chair

MINUTES

TOWN COUNCIL/BOARD OF EDUCATION JOINT MEETING ZOOM REMOTE MEETING February 24, 2022 – 7:00 P.M.

TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Jones, Chair; John Reagan, Vice Chair; Sami Khan, Lou Luba, Katie Murray, Tammy Nuccio, Colleen Yudichak

BOE MEMBERS PRESENT: Ashley Lundgren, Chair; Sophia Shaikh, Vice Chair; Jacob Marie, Secretary; Jennifer Gallichant, Christine Griffin, Dana Philbin (arrived 7:27PM); Christina Plourd, Jayden Regisford

TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: none

BOE MEMBERS ABSENT: Tony Holt

OTHERS PRESENT: Lisa Hancock, Interim Town Manager; 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 – Explanation of the budget process by the Town Manager
2. Board of Education Budget Presentation
Dr. Willett reviewed the following document:
Board of Education – Budget Summary Information – 2022-2023 Budget
Available at: www.tolland.k12.ct.us/board_of_education/budget under Budget Documents

The waterfall graph illustrates the budget for FY22 Budget (\$40,819,489), the increases leading to the Superintendent's Proposed Budget FY23 (\$42,837,400, 4.94%), the decreases made by the Board, and the BOE Adopted Budget FY23 (\$42,096,525, 3.13%).

Dr. Willett explained that the Board reduced the budget a number of ways including utilizing trend analysis, moving some positions to grants, and using the Educational Reserve Fund (ERF) for some capital technology items.

Dr. Willett reviewed the BOE FY23 Budget Composition (pie chart) and the Highlights of the Budget.

Ms. Griffin noted that the Finance and Facilities Committee (FFC) reviewed the numbers. The budget supports students, takes care of student needs, and moves the district forward. When making reductions, the Committee removed items that were not student-focused and recognized that the ERF could be utilized while maintaining the fund so it would be available for emergencies.

Ms. Lundgren explained that the Board reviewed all of the information including small details and she believes in the budget presented.

Ms. Shaikh thanked Ms. Griffin for doing the trend analysis and fully supports the budget. It is good for the students, educators, and administrators.

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

Ms. Hancock noted that over the past years the town and the BOE have shared a lot. Currently, the town does much of the property maintenance and landscaping. Financial information is shared between the departments, they work together on purchasing, and there is a combined utility fund. Further, they participate in a shared ECHIP program – an employee health insurance program which has saved over \$1M. Additionally, they have a joint agreement regarding grounds maintenance.

Dr. Willett added that much is done in synergy between the town and the BOE and they support each other in a variety of ways with respect to facilities and grounds. The Utility Internal Service Fund (UISF) agreement was created some time ago as a creative construct in terms of budgeting. Further, ECHIP is very supportive and synergistic for the town and the BOE. In terms of interaction, he has always had a great relationship with the town managers and staff works closely together and are supportive of each other. The town has a wonderful set of systemic supports and synergies not seen in other places and a number of examples can be cited.

Ms. Nuccio asked about the \$40K + \$5K for Tyler Industries for software updates and commented that it seems like an opportune time to get the BOE on the Munis software used by the town rather than investing in updates and new training. This would provide consistency. Ms. Hancock noted that she has used Munis in other communities and a cost analysis would need to be done. The BOE cannot just be added to the system. The software would need to be purchased and it could increase the cost of the annual maintenance contract in the range of \$40K. The BOE has a large budget that would drive the cost higher than what the town pays now. Ms. Nuccio commented that it would be offset. Ms. Hancock added that implementation would need to be considered as well. The town and BOE have different reporting needs and requirements. A consultant would need to be brought in and a lot of data transitioning would be needed. When she did this about 15 years ago, it cost \$35K-50K to link the data banks. Thus, a thorough analysis by a consultant would be needed to learn what would be required and to get cost estimates to see if it would be beneficial. Consideration of the need for servers or cloud servers would need to be reviewed as well. Ms. Nuccio commented that the BOE currently has servers so it would not be 100% additive and it would be aligned with the Council's discussion about aligning back-office items and finding efficiencies. It would also provide the ability to access the OpenGov and ClearGov sites. She would like to spend the \$50K on a consultant to create one system for the entire town and believes they should look at this for a shared service. Ms. Hancock noted that while some boards of education are on Munis, others are on Tyler Technologies Infinite Visions. It is something that can be explored. Dr. Willett noted that Infinite Visions provides more detail that seems to be beneficial for boards of education. He added that a consultant could be hired to do an analysis, but he believes there would be a tremendous amount of lost productivity in the time it would take for the transition and recoding. The town and BOE regularly share information and many state reports require constant access to a detailed system. He is unsure if Munis has the same detail structure and asked what they would like to achieve. Ms. Nuccio responded transparency and consolidation of back-office items. In terms of transparency, anyone could then click and drill down into information. Dr. Willett noted that while they can review consolidation of back-office items, it has been examined many times.

Ms. Murray asked when the last time the accounting software was updated. Dr. Willett was unsure but does not believe it is done annually. Ms. Murray asked if between now and the next time an update is needed, they could take a closer look at it. The budget starts in July so it may not be feasible to do between now and then. It would give them time to look at a potential shared service, answer the questions being asked, and address the transparency concerns. Dr. Willett noted that everything deserves to be examined. Ms. Murray commented that she believes the goal is to utilize Tolland's budgeted money for the best software to achieve savings in shared activities as well as provide transparency. Ms. Hancock noted that the conversion alone can take a couple of years. Dr. Willett noted that they want to have the best software – it would save time. Mr. Jones recommended having a consensus from the Councilors or planning a joint meeting.

Mr. Luba commented that he concurred with Ms. Nuccio. The concern is that if they invest the \$40K now, the next time it is brought up the response will be that the \$40K was already invested. The \$40K would go to waste if they are looking at something new. Rather than spending the \$40K on the update, he recommended investing it in a study looking at the needs holistically – those of the town and the BOE - and formulating a full package. Transparency is important so everyone has access to the information and can see the data.

Ms. Hancock clarified that Mr. Luba would like to review data. Due to internal control, they cannot provide access to the systems, but the product used for the budgeting book allows for a review of details. Mr. Luba explained that he would like everything integrated into OpenGov so people could see the information and he believes this would be consistent with the goal of back-office consolidation. Ms. Hancock explained that she has no objection but noted that they already own ClearGov and while they do not have the transparency for every piece of it, they do have it for the budget process that allows one to access several years of detail. This is a separate cost from the Munis and Infinite Vision software; however, either software can download into the product. If the ultimate goal is to combine finance departments, then they would want to look at combining into one software, but a review of the cost benefit may show

that the cost is the same as what is being paid now. If they want to query data, either software can be loaded into an OpenGov or ClearGov product and could be less costly after the module is purchased.

Ms. Plourd commented that she believes Tyler Technologies would be willing to do a demo for the BOE and the Council or a committee made up of members from both entities. It is not that there is not transparency, it is just that it seems that the system is old and does not allow one to access needed information. Whether this fits into this budget process, she is unsure but would like to take the time to look at it.

Ms. Griffin was in favor of seeing what is available. She would like to be able to drill down into the numbers whether via a shared system or access to a system module noted by Ms. Hancock and for the BOE to have the same capabilities as the Council.

Ms. Hancock noted that people can access how the budget book works via the town's website: www.tolland.org/finance-department (Adopted 2021-2022 Budget) to see if this is the information they would like.

Ms. Nuccio asked, since they want to review the software, if there is any harm in not spending the \$50K for the update this year. Dr. Willett explained that the software is critical to operations and is used multiples times a day. They do not have the option of it not being functional and if not updated and there is an issue, when the Board calls for support, the company will note that the software was not updated, and this would create issues. He likes the idea of examining the options but would be nervous not updating the software.

Mr. Jones asked if the Council had any objections to the software update. Mr. Luba voiced that he did. He understands Dr. Willett's concern but believe it should be looked at now. If the \$50K is spent on the update he would like them to start looking at vendors, so they are not at the same point next year.

Dr. Willett noted that the update includes maintenance and support. The BOE needs to be able to call and receive support.

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

Renie Besaw, 230 Grant Hill Road, commented that she lived in a town with Munis for both the schools and the town. It was not a problem. There was 1 CFO and less staff overall because a single group was able to do everything. They had OpenGov which worked fine. While she appreciates the conversation, they are talking about \$45K in a \$42M budget. She is not saying that it is not worthwhile but does not understand the hesitation. There are many other towns that are doing this. She understands that no one wants to make this big of a change. It is disruptive but once done she thinks it would be well worth the time and effort. That said, she believes the 3% increase is high when there are fewer students and there are probably more efficiencies. Ms. Besaw added that more teachers are coming on for fewer students and it is a little confusing why this needs to happen. In terms of Munis vs. 2 different systems, she believes the cost savings could be far greater than only the cost of the software in terms of positions.

Kate Howard Bender, 103 Goose Lane, thanked the BOE for passing the budget 8:1. She commented that it is about time that they make sure the students and the community have what is needed. She asked about pre-investments made over the last 2 years, their impact, and why it has compounded to the 3.13% increase this year. Ms. Howard-Bender noted that her 6th grader and her 9th grader have 26 children in every one of their classes. This is a staffing and class size issue. Ms. Griffin explained the pre-investments. Due to expenses that were not needed due to COVID, leftover funding was available and some was used to pre-invest. Approximately \$150K that would be considered recurring expenses and anything recurring was put back into this budget. Pre-investments were made in LiteracyHow and health insurance. There is not anything that they pre-invested in that is not included in the budget being presented.

Ms. Costa, 54 Josiah Lane, thanked the BOE for voting 8:1 in favor of the budget. She believes it is telltale that they are 1 hour and 10 minutes into a budget meeting and students and education have not been discussed. She noted that she fully supports the budget.

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

Mr. Luba commented that the Board voted 8:1 in favor of the budget and he would like to know why the 1 person opposed. Ms. Plourd responded that she voted "no". She explained it was because of the allocation of the money and not the number. Specifically, she had concerns about the non-certified salaries line item. She would like more conservative 2-4% raises and does not believe anyone should receive a 15% raise. Ms. Plourd commented that in terms of the number itself, she supports the work done by the Board. They cut many non-education expenses and she does not oppose the number. She would just like to see the money redirected.

Ms. Murray asked if the Board feels the budget adequately funds the vision, mission, and goals of Tolland Public Schools (TPS). Ms. Lundgren explained that they reviewed the information and maintaining the pathways and visions Dr. Willett has for students, to receive additional recognition and to bridge the gap when going from TMS to THS, is very important and was one of her main concerns. She would rather have a teacher in front of a student than technology. They had to use ERF for the technology devices, and they will not be able to do this forever so this is something they will see in the budget going forward. Mr. Marie explained that the increases can be broken into 2 parts – those that have to be paid (contractual) and other items that the Board would like to support. The latter for him is about recovering from losses due to the pandemic and include mental health and keeping students competitive after graduation. In terms of the latter, the budget supports the Skills for Adolescents class, social emotional learning (SEL) training, and pathways. That said, he is happy to hear suggestions for efficiencies but believes the budget supports students. Ms. Murray confirmed that this was an answer of "yes" to her question. She asked if the budget allows TPS to provide more, less, or the same number of services to students compared to services offered this year. Ms. Lundgren responded that they are providing more given the math specialist. Ms. Murray asked what will be cut if the Council does not approve the 3.13%. Ms. Lundgren responded that there would be detrimental issues. They worked with the town to get the healthcare cost down and when they looked for ways to save, they had to use the ERF. It still has a balance and if there are outplacements the money will be needed. Ms. Murray asked about it being "detrimental" to the students. Dr. Willett explained that a maintenance budget is approximately 2.5%. There are hundreds of state mandates, and the average job of an educator today is about .6 function of what it used to be because of the mandates and more work. At one point he reviewed 10 years back and determined that there is less in the district now with respect to resources for general education students. Large cuts usually take from general education in areas such as the arts, unified arts, music, social studies, and intervention programs. He cited the World Language program as one that has been downgraded. Anytime one has a lower than maintenance budget it deeply impacts the quality overall and has a negative residual effect over programming which usually hits general education students the most. Over a span of 7-10 years, approximately \$5M has eroded. Further, one can see the impact on the richness of schedules which now have fewer periods and offerings for general education because special education is mandated. Ms. Griffin commented that she would like the pensions examined. Given the current state of the economy, inflation, and discount rates, she hopes to find some savings. She believes they are having an actuary look into this. Ms. Hancock explained that the town does not have a pension – it has a defined contribution plan (401A). This is a percentage that is based off the salary and the risk is on the employee, not the community. Ms. Griffin confirmed that given that it is not a pension, they will not be able to realize any savings. Ms. Murray confirmed that based on Dr. Willett's statement, if the 3.13% is not approved, the impact will be on general education services. Dr. Willett explained that severe reductions can only come from personnel reductions and they would generally be those in general education. He noted that during the pandemic a number of positions, particularly 1:1 paraprofessional positions in special education, were lost and they need to fill them to be in compliance but individual jobs like this do not add up to much in the overall span of time so deep cuts would be looked at for the social studies, math, and interventionist positions etc. This would need to be discussed by the Board. Ms. Murray asked if there is concern that a reduction in general education services could result in an increased cost for services in the future. Dr. Willett responded that there would be increased cost and lost opportunity. He explained that if they do not create models with competitive systems given the magnet and charter schools, there is a driving force to have money shifted in their direction. When the positions noted are lost it deeply impacts the district's ability to support the pathways and lighthouse projects. Enrollments is not declining and are projected to increase but hits to the positions cause attrition. If the district's programming is not maintained, they are in danger of attrition over the next few years. He added that in terms of facilities, the .6 investment will allow them to save significantly more than the expense and what the district has paid to provide the skills for the person in the position. Ms. Murray asked if they expect a negative impact on general education services to cost the district more in future years. Dr. Willett responded that he does.

Mr. Khan commented that during the pandemic the system was shut down for a few months and thus the budget still had money. He is sure the 2020/2021 budget should have quite a bit of money left over and now they are talking about a 3% increase. He is ok with this for education but noted there should be a lot of money left over and asked about it. Ms. Griffin explained that some of the money left over in 2020 went to pre-investments, some funded the COVID Relief Fund (CRF), and the remaining went to the Educational Reserve Fund (ERF). In 2021, some of the left-over money went to pre-investments and the ERF. The latter fund will be used in the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Khan commented that he believes there was more money left over. Dr. Willett explained that any trend analysis right now has perils due to 4 atypical years (2 COVID years and 2 state budget years). Regarding the most recent year, buses were not running and the district went to the bus company and recouped money. If funds are not dedicated to students services (as per §10-222), the services did not happen and students' education suffers - which it did. Boards of education do not have the benefit of multi-year budgets – they end at a fixed point. The Council provided for the CRF so this limitation could be transcended. This allowed funds from the prior year, that could not be used to render services to children, to be used to help with learning loss via programs such as Extended School Year (ESY) to help build the skills lost when students had to learn remotely. This year the CRF funded associate educators (AEs) who were available for students who had to quarantine. Thus, the dollars that were not spent during the pandemic were either spent or will be spent this summer servicing students' needs due to COVID. The ERF and CRF structures exist to make this possible.

Ms. Murray clarified Mr. Khan's question and asked how much money was saved when the district shut down due to COVID. Dr. Willett responded that \$796K was transferred to the CRF and the ERF. The ERF is being used for technology and the CRF is being used for the 2022 ESY program and AEs.

Mr. Khan commented that the last few years the system was working. He asked why they need the left-over money. Dr. Willett explained that during the pandemic the system was still running but some services could not be provided to students. The quality that the system could provide was much lower because students were at home and not in class. The system spent money on personnel although some staff left. Whatever is left over at the end of the budget year goes back to the town. The town makes the decision about what to do with the funds. Because there were services that could not be rendered, the Board and the town created the CRF which allowed the BOE to transcend the one-year timeline and use the money to serve the students via the ESY program.

Ms. Plourd commented that at the end of FY20 the Board did a 30:40:30 split of the remaining funds into the CRF, ERF, and the town respectively. Any money left over this year would be due to finding efficiencies.

Mr. Khan commented that if the school system is open 38/39 weeks per year, that is about \$1M/week. At about \$1M/week and if the schools shut down for 3-4 weeks, millions of dollars must be left over, not \$100K. Ms. Lundgren explained that there are still costs when the schools are closed such as those for maintenance and salaries. Mr. Khan noted that he is asking the following as a resident. Over the last 2-3 years the Town of Tolland's income did not go up and every department of the town asks for money. He asked where the town will get the money from unless it is borrowed. He asked how far the town can go and how it will pay for it in the future. Every year it is a couple of million dollars more. Mr. Khan commented that he does not work this way – if he does not have money, he does not spend it. They are talking about millions of dollars. How will the town get the money and "give it in silver platter"? Mr. Khan explained that he is asking as a taxpayer. How far can a taxpayer go?

Mr. Marie explained that when he created the budget with Dr. Willett and the other Board members, he did not want to look at what he is producing as something he is entitled to receiving. As a Board member it is his job to create a budget that supports the schools in a fiscally responsible way. Some items drive the number up that are unavoidable but are important investments.

Mr. Khan clarified that he is speaking as a taxpayer and asked where Ms. Hancock will get the money to give it on a silver platter. Every department is asking for money. How far can Ms. Hancock go borrowing the money? As a taxpayer, when will he be paying for that money? Every year they ask for more and more. How far can one afford this moving to South Carolina? Mr. Khan explained that it is a general question and not about the Board's budget. He noted that he is ok with the 3%.

Mr. Jones explained that he appreciates Mr. Khan's question, but it is off topic from tonight's discussion on the budget. Questions about long-term bonding and borrowing are better suited to a one-on-one conversation with Ms. Hancock. Mr. Khan explained that they are talking about money and as a taxpayer is asking the question. Ms. Lundgren explained

that there are mill rates and grants, but she is unsure he can get an answer to personal finance questions. Mr. Khan explained that he is asking how Ms. Hancock is going to get the bond money/loan. Next year departments will ask for another increase on their budgets. The money keeps adding up. Dr. Willett explained that Mr. Khan is able to help decide this. The Council holds the purse strings. Dr. Willett explained that over the past few years the Board's budgets have been 2%, .1%, .84%, .78%, .0%, 2.7%, 2.9% and all the way back to a 1%. A lot of due diligence was done by the Board throughout this process. The Council's job is to decide what the town can afford. The Board is supposed to offer a budget that sustains the needs of the children. A budget is then presented at referendum for the people to decide. If a budget is not enough to support the school system, people will leave. It is about what people are willing and able to spend. It is a balancing act. If budgets do not sustain why people are interested in living in a town, they will leave. Additionally, one does not want to overwhelm people in a town so they do not stay. There is a delicate balance. Mr. Khan commented that the town did not increase its income – there are no new businesses in town.

Ms. Yudichak commented that the 3.13% is an investment for the community. She added that she believes the BOE and town work well together and she gets nervous when words like "transparency" are used. Unfortunately, it always looks like the BOE has extra money at the end of the year and it is not true. Education is different than it was years ago and she does not like when numbers are put on students. She asked about the morale of staff. Ms. Gallichant commented that she does not know where the conversations come from that enrollment and class sizes are going down. Studies have shown that a range of 16-18 students in a classroom provides the most support and they are at over 20 in almost all classes. She has children in TMS and THS and their classes are up to 26. The classes where they struggle have high numbers of students. The 7th grade class has had a situation where a teacher had to move every year since kindergarten to accommodate the class size. With the loss of learning and need for mental health, it is not the time for larger class sizes or to take staff away. Children on the cusp of needing special education need classroom support and small classes with one-on-one time with teachers. Ms. Gallichant commented that it is great that they are adding a counselor and continuing Skills for Adolescents. They should be adding social workers and more programs and services but are doing what they can right now. Guidance used to go into classrooms to get students ready for middle school and when they spoke with administrators, they all noted that help was needed in terms of social emotional health. The budget supports bringing in more staff for academics and social emotional health. It supports technology. They need to recruit, build, and have students in a place where they are more competitive. This budget helps the district take a step forward. Ms. Yudichak asked if staff is feeling supported. Dr. Willett responded that the pandemic hurt everyone in all sectors. Both the job and expectations of an educator have significantly grown. Many feel very strained. The district has high quality teachers and he works every day to ensure they are served. Students are the first priority and staff are his primary importance thereafter. He tries to do everything he can to keep them sustained to serve students.

Dr. Willett provided enrollment data. It is projected that there will be an increase of approximately 200 students from 2021/22 to 2031/32 in pre-k through 5. Enrollment has plateaued. In terms of education, staff will need to be adjusted to address these numbers.

Ms. Yudichak asked for an estimate of where the Board's budget will come in at year end. Ms. Griffin responded that she expects it to be close to what was budgeted. Dr. Willett noted that they have some pandemic-related educational impact students with different exceptionality programming needs. This has not been seen in a long time and is creating a situation that will balance with the excess cost grants from the state.

Mr. Reagan commented that he understands that the biggest impact on the budget increase is the contracted salaries line. He asked if there are circumstances where someone under a contracted salary would get more than the contract calls for. Dr. Willett explained that degree changes may have them earning more and jumping up in the tiers. Mr. Reagan asked if there are any circumstance where someone may earn more through performance. Dr. Willett explained that for most contracted employees there is a merit piece where if they hit indicators they can make a small amount more, but this is a comparatively small number of people.

Ms. Nuccio asked about line item 564. The budget assumes a 3% increase but this line since 2014 has been underspent. She asked what is driving the 3%. Dr. Willett responded that it is based on the current program and what they project the students will need. Seven outplacements came in over the past 2 months and this impacts this line. Lines 560, 561, and 564 merged a bit differently over the past few years so it is not a comparative statistic year over year. If they can do a cost avoidance program that allows them not to spend some of the funds, they will achieve the differential, but they need to budget for the program needs of the students. The LEAP program, a cost avoidance measure, currently

has 30 students and this is partially why there are differences over a few years. The 3% is based on projections for the special education tuitions. Ms. Griffin added that some students have gone to magnets and charters as well.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #5 and moving paras to behavioral staff. She asked if these paras are being trained to be in behavioral positions. Dr. Willett explained that paras are part of the bargaining unit which has an expectation of work. Typically, the ABIS (Associate Behavioral Intervention Specialist) staff sign up for the job of managing behavior and are often at the market rate. Ms. Griffin clarified that the positions are being transferred, not the people.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #10. Given the articulating lift in the capital budget plan for this year, she asked if there is still a need to pay outside contractors. Ms. Griffin explained that the Board put the articulating lift in the following year's capital budget and planned to first discuss possibly sharing equipment with the town. Mr. Jones noted that they will need to have a discussion during the budget process about moving the lift to a different capital year. Ms. Plourd asked how the \$80K lift listed for 2024 was approved for this year. Ms. Nuccio explained that the capital budget is submitted and then Ms. Hancock manages it within the debt plan to schedule purchasing and bonding. Ms. Hancock noted that the lift would not be debt – CNRE would be used. An e-mail with more information will be forwarded to the Board. Ms. Griffin noted that the conversation should be continued before the capital budget is finalized because the Board has a number of items in 2023 that the Board placed a greater importance on than the lift.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #14 and confirmed that the IDEA extension was pushed to age 22.

Ms. Nuccio asked about ARP IDEA 611. She asked if it was ARP money and if so, should it not be in the budget and contributing to the MBR (Minimum Budget Requirement). Dr. Willett noted that it is a grant, it is in the budget as a grant, and is pandemic related. Ms. Nuccio about the \$15K for field trips in the ESY program. Dr. Willett explained that ESY programs are required to have social emotional support and lists items such as field trips. These are in the form of staycations as well, in other words, activities on-site to support social and emotional health. This is state-funded, pandemic related, and not part of the operating budget.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #16 and the AEs hired for the quarantines. She thought they were funded through the CRF and would not be in the budget and added to the MBR. She asked if they are now part of the MBR. Dr. Willett explained that the 1-year positions are funded by the CRF. The AEs that are part of the pandemic are part of the CRF. The new terminology of AE may remain.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #19 and how Open Choice funds are used to lower the budget. Dr. Willett explained that the funds are used for services for Tolland students who live in Hartford and Tolland students who live in Tolland. It may be tutoring, transportation, or special services programming. This funding is not in the operating budget and is cost avoidance as it is funds spent on Tolland students that do not have to be requested for in the operating budget.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #20. She asked where she could see the offsetting reduction in the FTE head count. Dr. Willett explained it is not an FTE reduction – it is a shift from 54 to 57 and is in the certified and non-certified lines. Between the SPB and the Board's budget were also grant shifts. Positions were shifted as well on and off grant. Ms. Nuccio asked if the grant ended for the counselor position for TMS. Dr. Willett responded that it did.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #30 and why Technology Repair and Maintenance is increasing. Ms. Griffin explained that it was negligible last year.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #31. She asked if the special education bus transportation is accounted for in the IDEA or other areas. Dr. Willett responded that it is not. She confirmed that the increase in general education transportation is contractual.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #32 and the social worker position. Dr. Willett explained that there is more than 1 social worker and 1 was put to grant. He does not believe this is the same position noted in Question #25.

Ms. Nuccio asked if ESTEEM, a program that has been in place for a long time, is the best program. Ms. Gallichant commented that the majority of teachers believe strongly in the program, and it has been updated.

Ms. Nuccio asked for information on the THS Advisory Curriculum. Dr. Willett explained that Advisory is the high school program that helps kids avoid destructive decision making. It is usually thematic based on student programming, SEL, and academic needs.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #33 and the pre-k busing. Dr. Willett explained the pre-k 3.25 is in the general budget.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #34 and the \$5K for the TIS floor cleaner. She asked if this is on top of the replacement of the 2 floor cleaners in the capital budget. Dr. Willett noted that he will have to check with Mr. Sztaba.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #39. She asked if the desktop replacements are for necessary given that laptops are in use. Dr. Willett responded that some of the units are necessary due to the need for stronger processors.

Ms. Nuccio asked about the list of 25 vacancies. They are all listed under salaries at 100% so there is an assumption that 25 people will be hired on day 1. Dr. Willett explained that they are hiring people now, not on day 1 and they do plan on filling all the vacancies.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #42. She asked if there is an offsetting reduction in the budget for overtime. Dr. Willett explained that the person was hired exceptionally low with the understanding that once they proved themselves, they would be brought to the same level as any other person in the class. This brings the person up to the rightful place in the job classification. If this was not done they would likely lose this person and the person saves the district money.

Mr. Luba asked if the proposed budget is based on Dr. Willett's assessment of the needs of the schools and his priorities. Dr. Willett noted that the budget presented reflects the priorities of the Board. Mr. Luba confirmed that Dr. Willett prioritizes the needs and makes recommendations. Dr. Willett confirmed that this would be the Superintendent's Proposed Budget. Mr. Luba asked if when the Board asks that cuts be made, Dr. Willett then reviews and reprioritizes. Dr. Willett explained that typically the Board selects items to reduce that he would not have chosen or identifies items to save that he would not have. His job is to propose items, bring them to the Board, and then follow their selections. Mr. Luba asked if the Council comes back saying that it wants to see a lower number, that it cannot say where the cuts should be made. Dr. Willett noted that the Council would say what the number should be and the Board then considers it. Mr. Luba explained that what concerns him is that general education would suffer the most with reductions. He asked if something in general education needed to be protected if Dr. Willett could find other ways around it. Dr. Willett responded that this is not accurate. General education typically takes the hit, and this is evidenced over time. Special education cannot be modified. Mr. Luba asked if it was accurate that if Dr. Willett felt a general education program had to be kept that he could find saving elsewhere based in his priorities. Dr. Willett explained that when one must make a cut, they make the cut. Ms. Shaikh explained that general education is where the cuts are made first because it is the most malleable. The other areas are mandated and not flexible. Mr. Luba noted that special education cannot be touched due to mandates and asked why general education is looked at next rather than other areas. Ms. Shaikh responded that they did this. Ms. Griffin reviewed all of the areas that would not directly impact students to find cost savings. The only other place to look is general education. Mr. Luba commented that every time the Council has come back and asked for a certain amount that it feels is appropriate, the response is that teaching positions will be cut rather than looking for savings in other areas and it puts the Council in a difficult position making it appear that the Council wants to cut teaching positions when it does not. Dr. Willett explained that if they are looking for \$15K it can be found but not \$2M. He added that the budget does not include a curriculum director or a social studies coordinator. The budget has teachers in lieu of other items. The objective is to always protect the jobs that have interaction with students. General education can also mean after school items – programming, late buses etc. Mr. Marie commented that it depends on the amount of the reduction. While he would look at other trend items, at this point he does not believe they could go much further without dipping into general education funding. Mr. Luba noted that he appreciates and recognizes this. It is difficult for the Council because it makes it seem that they do not appreciate the positions or understand the impact. It needs to be balanced. While the Board's obligation is to look at the education of the students, the Council needs to take a more holistic approach.

Ms. Murray commented that Tolland is known for quality schools and people move to Tolland for the schools. She asked how the Board's budget with the trends and a 5-year increase of 0.74% and a 9-year increase of 1.5% has impacted the quality of education. Dr. Willett responded that it is a slow bleed of programming. TMS had a more

robust schedule with more structures and support a decade ago. Part of this is because of the increase in special education mandates over the past 2 decades. Resources had to be drawn away and put toward the mandates. Slowly over time many programming items including social emotional programs were lost. The town has an excellent school system but over a long span of time one does not realize the impact unless they look back a decade ago. Some is a natural adjustment in enrollment but is it also from budgets that were lower than maintenance. It is better to have a stable budget cycle rather than one with great fluctuations. Ms. Murray asked how the quality of education can be improved in a cost-effective way. Dr. Willett responded that the town has done a great job with cooperative agreements and arrangements. In the district, cost avoidance programs have been very good at mitigation and maximizing dollars, but they are at the edge of what they can provide. The plan was to move forward into trying to offer tuition programs. The 3 pillars were cost avoidance, stopping attrition, and making the district a place where people would want to pay to attend. Ms. Murray asked what elements are in the budget to improve the quality of education in a cost-effective way. Dr. Willett explained that the math position covers numeracy coaching, the honors and bridge programs, and math structures at TMS that allow students to do things at their ability level. Another program allows the district to offer phonics which help avoid dyslexia issues. Every program has a distinct purpose and protects the district and students from higher costs in the long run. Ms. Murray asked if Dr. Willett could quantify how much of the budget helps prevent additional costs. He responded that ballpark figures would have 1 program at \$1M and another about \$600K.

Mr. Khan commented that they have an excellent school system and kids should get a quality education. He thinks they are doing an excellent job even with the vacancies and Ms. Lungren's team did a good job. He thanked them.

Mr. Jones asked how the town's average increase compares to other districts. Dr. Willett responded that they are comparable.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #43 and if LiteracyHow is a train the trainer program. Dr. Willett responded that administrators feel the program is necessary for student achievement in general education. Ms. Plourd noted she has always been proud of this program. It helps the general education population.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #47. She asked why they are not giving the 2-year-old 12th grade laptops to the 9th grade students. Dr. Willett explained they will be used for parts and as swap out laptops throughout the district. Further, the software on a 6-year-old laptop really slows down processing and freshmen would have a 6-year-old laptop at graduation if this group was given to freshmen.

Ms. Nuccio asked about Question #52. She commented that they typically have not spent the money in line item 300. Dr. Willett explained that there needs to be enough to flex to whatever the issues are. She noted the same in line item 330. Dr. Willett noted these lines contain rolled up information and include special education assessments that can fluctuate but need to be budgeted to cover the potential need. Ms. Nuccio highlighted the same situation in line 342 and noted that there might be an opportunity here. In terms of line 430, between 2015/16 and 2016/17 the budget jumped \$80K and every year since they have come in under budget. Dr. Willett explained that this can be mostly attributed to atypical years related to the state budget crisis and COVID. In addition, generally what is not spent to handle project the town may be asked for in capital over a longer span of time. There are no perfect ways to do this in these lines as they are items planned for 18 months in advance. At the end of the year, they are well utilized and by doing so the town does not have to address them in another way.

Ms. Nuccio commented on end of year funds. While they like to talk about budget to budget, outside the government world they look at actuals to budget. When looking at the last year's actuals and comparing them to the budget approved for the current year, there was a 4.07% increase with \$800K left at the end of the year and an \$800K increase for a total of a \$1.6M jump from actuals. The 3.13% is hard for her to swallow given this. She would like to know the projection of where the year will end before the Council debates the full budget. She does not challenge the idea that education is not important to the town – it is almost 80% of the total budget. Ms. Nuccio is concerned that there are a number of places where the actuals have not been spent historically. Dr. Willett explained that buses were not running last year and other similar items. There are good explanations for the items over the past 4 years. Town departments ended last year between 2% and 3% and this was a function of the situation they were in. This is why he would be reluctant to use it as a reason not to vote for a budget. To ask for a projection right now is difficult – they just had 7 outplacements and are at a negative at this moment in time. This is a new place to be, and it is also due to fluctuations caused by the pandemic.

Ms. Griffin commented that since the ECS should come in in February and some items had not been encumbered, they should have a better snapshot at the end of the month where the year will end. They are on track to spend the budget.

6. Adjournment

Mr. Luba motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:31PM

Ms. Nuccio seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken.

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,



Lisa Pascuzzi
Town Council Clerk

Town Council Chair