

**TOLLAND TOWN COUNCIL  
ZOOM REMOTE MEETING  
June 8, 2020 – 6:00 P.M.**

RECEIVED FOR RECORD  
TOLLAND, CT

2020 JUN 10 AM 8:31

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tammy Nuccio, Chair; Steven Jones, Vice Chair; Brenda Falusi, Lou Luba, John Reagan, Kurt Schenher, Cassandra York

*Sheila M Bailey*

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** none

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Michael Rosen, Town Manager; Bev Bellody, Director, Human Services; Lisa Hancock, Director, Finance & Records; Michael Wilkinson, Director of Administrative Services; Jim Paquin, Building Official; Heidi Samokar, Director of Planning & Development; Barbara Pettijohn, Director, Library Services; CSP Trooper Kevin Eklund; Scott Lappen, Director, Public Works; Sheila Bailey, Town Clerk; Michele Manas, Collector of Revenue; John Littell, Fire Chief/Director of Public Safety; Jason Lawrence, Assessor; Chris Jordan, Assistant Finance Director; Bruce Watt, Director, Recreation; Dr. Walter Willett, Superintendent; Rob DaBica, Fire Marshal

1. **Call to Order:** Ms. Nuccio called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance:** Recited
3. **Moment of Silence:** Observed
4. **Public Participation (2 minute limit)**

Mr. Schenher read a prepared statement:

I forgot who said this, but the quote goes Perception is reality. Unfortunately, the town of Tolland has been deceived thus leaving the Reality of our Budget convoluted and unclear. My household and presumably thousands of others throughout the town of Tolland received this postcard from the Tolland Democrat Town Committee While I won't address the rather macabre imagery on the front, I would like to address some of the fear mongering disinformation on the back. The overall message of the postcard is to chide the Town Council into using what the Tolland Democrats refer to as quote end quote the rainy-day fund, and they go on to frighten residents with saying and I quote "without using the rainy-day fund council IS CONSIDERING Cuts to: Public Safety, Business Development, Tax Relief for seniors and Tech support of Students". This perception of the town council simply isn't reality. It is dishonest to claim that the town council is considering cuts to Public safety when in fact the pre covid budget and the current town managers budget have no reductions in police and an add an addition Firefighter/ EMT. Business Development, well the current Economic Development Commission has a tiny budget of 6001 dollars which no one is interested in cutting. Tax Relief for seniors... the senior Tax relief program is codified as a town ordinance and is determined by a senior's income solely and is independent of what is in our budget or not. And finally, Tech Support for students, this a very important item, unfortunately that item is in the BoE budget and any considerations to cut this item would be coming from them not the town council. With this much ambiguous and deceitful information it is abundantly clear this postcard is intended to spread fear and raise the ire of citizens who had their right to vote in a referendum stolen from them by the Governor of CT. This postcard while trying to skew your perception of the budget, conveniently left out the reality of it. The reality is the majority of councilors have been calling for a zero percent mill rate increase since the start of the pandemic. This postcard skips the reality that the BoE, superintendent and town manger have been working tireless to use overages in our budgets this year due to the pandemic, to pre purchase items from this future budget so we can lower the burden to tax payers while keeping the services we have always had. The perception is we need to use our rainy day fund, the reality is the Town managers proposed budget calls for 600 thousand dollars to be spent from the towns unassigned reserve fund to keep taxes at zero. This is the reality of what is going on at the town council level this is the reality when it comes to our budget.

I plead with residents of Tolland, stay involved send us your emails with questions or concerns, attend these virtual meetings to make your voice heard and understand the REALITY of the town budget and do not let your perception be distorted by this partisan drivel. Thank Tammy

Mr. Schenher displayed the following mailer:

Email **TownCouncil@Tolland.org** and tell them you want

- ✓ NO tax increase
- ✓ NO service cuts
- ✓ Use some of the emergency fund

People are struggling and we can't turn our backs on them. Ask Town Council to invest **SOME** of the Rainy Day fund to help **ALL** our residents.

Without using the Rainy Day Fund, Council is considering cuts to:

- Public Safety
- Business Development
- Tax relief for Seniors
- Tech support for students

[www.tollanddemocrats.org](http://www.tollanddemocrats.org)

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Ms. Falusi read an e-mail received by the Town Council:

May 8, 2020

Residents of Tolland and Town Council Members –

We, the leadership of the Tolland Democratic Town Committee, wish to respond to comments made by the Chairperson of the Town Council Ms. Tammy Nuccio regarding our recent mailer. Ms. Nuccio has sent responses to residents accusing our recent mailing as “misinformation”.

Our message was developed based on budget information published for the 2020-2021 fiscal year on the Town of Tolland [www.tolland.org](http://www.tolland.org) website. Perhaps the Chairperson’s confusion is in regard to what a “Reduction of Service” means.

Merriam-Webster defines the words reduce as “to diminish in size, amount, extent, or number” and service as “contribution to the welfare of others.” Therefore any diminishment of contribution to the welfare of others is a reduction in service.

When the Town Council considers cutting funding to items in the Town Budget, they are considering a reduction in service to the residents in town. Items in the current budget being considered by the Town Council include reductions in funding of public safety services, economic development services, tax relief for seniors, and technology support for students.

If the Council - through the voice of the Chairperson - does not correct the characterization of the facts as “misinformation”, then the Council is lying to the residents of Tolland. I hope the Council takes the time to carefully review the budget and the impact of any and all reductions on the residents of Tolland.

We, the leadership of the Tolland Democratic Town Committee, urge the Council to pass a budget that has no mill rate increases and, using some of the rainy day funds, continues to fund all services provided by the Town at the same level as the current fiscal year.

Thank you,

Katie Murray Chair Tolland Democratic Town Committee

Jason Philbin Vice-Chair Tolland Democratic Town Committee

Madhu Renduchintala Treasurer Tolland Democratic Town Committee

Elizabeth Costa Secretary Tolland Democratic Town Committee

**5. Consideration of the Town Council’s Proposed FY 2020-2021 Budget**

Ms. Nuccio introduced this item.

A discussion followed.

Mr. Luba commented that he respectfully disagrees and finds the response strange that was sent by the TDTC in their letter that was received fifteen minutes before this evening's meeting was scheduled to begin. Mr. Luba did not have time to fully digest it or form a coherent response. After being called out on some of the inaccuracies that were contained in the letter, they came back with a definition from the dictionary identifying that any miniscule change or diminution of the overall budget would be a reduction. He finds this disingenuous and believes it speaks volumes regarding their position. In their response they failed to state the cuts being proposed, where they are located, and referred to the budget without clear references. Mr. Luba would like to move on with a further discussion as was planned for this evening.

Ms. Nuccio stated that she has replied to every e-mail noting that it was misinformation. It is easy to pick a number, say to look at a number, without looking at the budget. Further, it was not taken into consideration that the BOE and the Town had money available at the end of this year due to COVID. These funds were used purposefully to reduce the budget numbers for next year while still maintaining service levels and purchasing items that were in the budget early. The budget does not have a reduction in service in any shape or form. Ms. Nuccio added that the budget presented this evening is the Town Manager's Recommended Budget. The Town Council will be considering the presented budget this evening.

Ms. Nuccio inquired if services were being cut on a public safety level. Mr. Rosen noted that much of the town's staff including department heads are in attendance this evening. Further, in the May 26, 2020 packet the list of one time reductions is itemized. They thoughtfully reached out to each of the department heads to learn what may not be happening next year on a one-time basis due to COVID-19. In regard to public safety, there are a couple of items that will be one time reductions and may be purchases made this year to offset next year's budget. For example, in the ambulance account there will be a communications decrease of \$5,839. This is due to a reduction in the 911 fee – a more favorable rate was received than was anticipated. In regard to the office machines, there is a portable projector that was slated to be replaced. This was reduced on a one-time basis as it was determined the current unit could be used for another year. In regard to the CPR and Medical Bag Replacements, they are going to buy one of these bags this year with savings and take it out of next year's budget (nearly \$2,500). Lastly, in regard to fuel and oil, due to a favorable rate there was a reduction in the diesel rate and they were able to realize these benefits. In regard to Animal Control, there was a reduced radio cost. In fire prevention (vehicle repair) they will get the vehicle online sooner than expected. For fire suppression, changes were due to the reduced 911 fee noted earlier. One fire training class was removed and fire apparatus foam was reduced because it will be purchased this year. Additionally, there were savings because in the capital budget this year is the self-contained breathing apparatus that will be paid for using the Ambulance Fund. Further, there is a reduction of \$1,700 due to the brand new equipment which does not require testing. Mr. Rosen noted that these are the only changes to public safety.

Ms. Nuccio confirmed that they are not cutting any public safety services and that they are adding to the head count of public safety. Mr. Rosen explained that in the proposed budget there will be a seventh firefighter/EMT that is scheduled to go online April 1, 2021. This position is being offset by the town engineer position. A full time engineer is not being hired so the overall head count of the town zeros out.

Ms. Nuccio asked about the budget from a business development perspective. Mr. Rosen responded that he believes this question may be in regard to the planning department. There was a \$7,500 reduction for a zoning consultant. Ms. Samokar spoke to this item. She explained that they are continuing to implement the Plan of Conservation and Development which requires a good amount of zoning work. They had requested \$15,000 in next year's budget to continue this work and were able to cut it in half based on the assumption that a year from now she will request the additional \$7,500. They will still be working on the POCD and have the consultant but will spread the work over the two years.

Ms. Nuccio commented that she was "stumped" regarding the tax relief for seniors. Tax relief for seniors is Ordinance 60. It is not funded and they cannot take money from it unless there is a change to the ordinance. It is a direct write off from the grand list. Ms. Nuccio distinctly recalls Ms. Hancock explaining that the reason it was going from \$6.5M to \$6.4M was due to a change in the demographics such as someone moving or passing away in which case the house does not stay on the list. Ms. Nuccio added that if the town was cutting senior services she would be one of the first people to speak up about it.

Ms. Nuccio addressed tech support for students. This would fall under the BOE. After the assumptions the Council has been presented, the BOE will have nearly \$1M in the ERF fund and will be purchasing 184 Chromebooks that Dr. Willett noted in his plan with the \$45K that will be received from the CARES Act fund. Thus, they are not cutting any support and the Council would not be able to do so.

Ms. Nuccio addressed the "no tax increase". She explained that this would be virtually impossible unless they were to cut more from the budget. A no mill rate increase does not equate to a no tax increase. The budget does not have any service cuts. Lastly, she confirmed that Mr. Rosen's proposal has \$600K from fund usage which is significantly higher than what has been used in prior years.

Ms. Falusi requested to present a summary of the correspondence received by the Council regarding the budget since the last time correspondence was presented. A brief discussion followed. Ms. Falusi commented that this relevant to the discussion and by not allowing it she believes they are ignoring the voice of the residents and not sharing the information. Ms. Nuccio noted that an item for Correspondence is not on this evening's agenda and an item for Public Participation was available. She does not believe anyone is being ignored and had Ms. Falusi read the summary of the correspondence.

Ms. Falusi requested that it go on record that she stated, [Ms. Nuccio's] "tone of voice has been very condescending for the past few minutes."

Ms. Falusi presented the correspondence received by the Council since that last time correspondence was presented.

- 9 e-mails supporting the use of the rainy day fund
- 8 e-mails requesting no cuts to services
- 9 e-mails supporting no tax increase
- 1 e-mail for minimum tax increases
- 1 e-mail for minimum service cuts
- 2 e-mails for not cutting any education services
- 1 e-mail for not using the rainy day fund
- 1 e-mail in support of zero budget planning

Mr. Luba clarified that there will be a tax increase but not a mill rate increase. A tax increase will be seen by those who have seen an increase in their property value based on the revaluation. They are not asking for a tax increase but there will be a property tax increase for some due to the revaluation. That said, some others may see a decrease in property taxes and still others will not see any change. Ms. Nuccio explained that every house was revaluated and values increased, decreased, or stayed the same. Those who saw a reduction in value will have a decrease in taxes, those where the value was flat will not see a change in taxes, and those whose homes increased in value will have an increase in taxes even with a zero change in the mill rate. In order to achieve a no tax increase they would have to cut the equivalent of the reduction in the grand list. The budget is not a "no tax increase" it is a "zero mill rate increase". Mr. Rosen commented that this was explained during the budget presentation and people were invited to use the calculator on the website to learn where they would be based on the revaluation value and the 36.05 mill rate.

Mr. Reagan addressed the postcard. He responded to every e-mail and used the words "misleading" and "factually inaccurate". From what he has heard from the Town Manager this evening he stands by these statements. Mr. Reagan requested clarification on the use of the fund balance and the plan. Mr. Rosen

explained in regard to the fund balance they needed to make ends meet with the no mill rate increase and no change in services further than those services that would be altered due to COVID-19. In most years they strive for \$200K-\$300K in fund balance usage which is not recurring revenue. It is an end of year transfer from the reserve account to offset any expenditures needed at the end of the fiscal year. The amount fluctuates depending on the year. When he was putting together the plan and speaking with the department heads, it became evident that in order to maintain the level of service and not have a mill rate increase they would need to use more cash from the fund balance. The amount they decided to comfortably use was \$600K rather than \$300K. This is an end of year transfer so if there are savings throughout the year the full \$600K may not be needed—only what is needed to close the gap. The \$600K figure is being used to do the modeling and fund balance analysis. Next year, if they drop to using \$300K the town may see a mill rate increase because the burden of the taxes will be put on the taxpayers. It would be more prudent to go from \$600K to \$450K and then \$300K the following year or some similar values but to pad it in over time. They will need to bring the level of revenue back up to meet where they are at now with the \$600K built into the budget. By doing it over time there will not be a spike in the tax rate. Mr. Rosen explained the \$600K will not be needed unless the expenditures are there at the end of the year. As staff they created a budget based on the Town Council's direction to not have a mill rate increase or reduction in services outside of what will be impacted due to COVID-19.

Mr. Luba inquired about Mr. Rosen's last response. With the use of \$600K from the fund balance will they be looking at a tax increase of between 1.3% and 1.5% next year? Mr. Rosen explained that every year they build in some use of reserves to ensure revenues balance the expenditures. This year, by doubling the fund balance usage, they are creating a larger gap for next year and will need to start the year off with the amount of fund balance used, whatever is lost in value in the grand list due to crumbling foundations, and any change in the allocation of ECS funding. Any reduction in revenue will need to be offset by expenditure reduction or a revenue increase. Generally they rely upon the tax revenue. Thus the \$600K use of fund balance plus the \$300K reduction in ECS funding plus any loss in property value due to crumbling foundations as well as anything else that may happen throughout the year will be the gap that will need to be made up. Mr. Rosen added that there may be items during the year in the town's favor such as savings or changes in the budget. It can go either way. Ms. Nuccio explained the Town Manager's proposed budget has a .7% expense increase and it is being funded by using the fund balance. One of her concerns, and she wants to ensure that all are aware of this, is if they put the budget through with the .7% as requested, the .7% will become the immediate hole next year because this is an increase in expenses and they will need to find a way to fund the next year. Further, they know that \$147K will need to be added to the BOE budget next year. In regard to the firefighter/EMT, they will need to add the delta of the one quarter to the full year. Further, in regard to the Vernon sewer project the capital projects will increase \$160K from this budget. Additionally, there will be an increase of \$150K of debt due to Birch Grove. In total they are looking at a 1.5%+ increase to open the door on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Thus, this year they are "borrowing from Peter to pay Paul". They are taking money from the fund to float the .7% expense increase knowing next year they will have to fully fund the .7% and it would not include anything else.

Mr. Rosen explained that the goal was a no mill rate increase but in future years things may come back online or they will need to budget for expenses that will need to return. He does not want there to be sticker shock. They anticipate items will need to be put back into the budget and a little more fund balance than is traditionally used will need to be utilized to offset mill rates as they layer.

Mr. Jones inquired of Ms. Pettijohn about any lost revenue or change of flow in business at the library over the past few months and if she foresees any changes in anticipated revenue. Ms. Pettijohn explained that they would typically gather fines but they are not doing so because they are closed. Further, they are not charging overdue fees from March 16<sup>th</sup> until they reopen.

Mr. Jones inquired of Public Works if there has been any change in efficiency over the past couple of months due to fewer vehicles on the road. Mr. Lappen responded that they have been able to do projects more quickly due to limited traffic but they have not realized an extension of the lives of any roads. Mr. Jones inquired if there are any improvements or changes that can be expected in the grassy areas over the summer given that they do not know when areas such as fields will return to having recreational activities. Mr. Lappen explained that they are still maintaining the fields. If they let items such as field lines disappear it will take a lot of time to reset the field. Further, there are families and groups using the properties for exercise.

Mr. Jones inquired about human services and how they have been doing and how the department foresees the next few months with the proposed budget and being able to help families in need. Ms. Bellody explained that the department has not had any staff reductions and all are working full time. They have been able to assist clients with various programs and Tolland is an extremely generous community. They have been receiving donations, including those to the food bank, which have been used to help offset costs for families. Ms. Bellody believes they will be able to perform these services.

Mr. Jones asked if there has been any update in regard to receiving financial reimbursement or grants for not laying off town staff. Ms. Hancock responded that it is her understanding that the town will not be eligible for those programs. They are designed for private businesses. Ms. Hancock noted that there is a program through the CARES Act that will provide some funding for municipalities. The town will need to exhaust all other areas of funding such as FEMA for the COVID situation. Once they receive denials or learn what expenses are ineligible they can submit those to try to recover the funds. Mr. Jones commented that the Council did the right thing from an ethical and good governance standpoint by not considering furloughs or layoffs.

Ms. York commented that they working in oppressive times and are forecasting for something that may not happen given the current climate. She asked Mr. Rosen if there are any unanticipated expenses that may put them in a difficult position next year that would cause them to use more of the fund balance or have a greater tax increase. She noted that while this is entirely speculation they are in some "crazy times" right now. Mr. Rosen responded that he would be hesitant to speculate too far. The only cursory indication would be in regard to state aid. The town received its state aid for town roads and the local capital improvement program last year. They do not know what will happen next year in regard to this. There are other large state aid pockets, such as ECS, but he has not heard of any reductions in this regard. The town's reliance on state aid is approximately 16-17% of the overall revenue stream. Mr. Rosen noted that there are smaller state aid streams and added that another item to follow is the tax collection rate. The latter is anticipated to be at 99% but it may not be accurate. He added that the deferral program due to COVID-19 is available and the deadline for application is July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Ms. Falusi commented that she disappointed that they are reducing staff and Birch Grove to assets and liabilities. They are assets and investments in the community that provide services needed to grow, learn, and recreate. Each employee is an asset and without them Tolland would not be the same.

Ms. Falusi received correspondence thanking the senior center and library for all they have done. Many people are receiving outreach phone calls and are appreciative for this. Ms. Falusi would like to discuss, without the senior center being open, how they foresee the future for seniors and others in need of services and programs. Ms. Bellody responded that they have been working with the entitlement programs and reaching out to clients so this aspect has not stopped. The senior center staff and others have been calling people regularly. Ms. Bellody struggles with the future and when they will be able to open the senior center. She has been looking for guidance from the health department.

Ms. Falusi inquired about the senior tax relief. For 2018/19 it was listed as \$7.3M, 2019/20 as \$6.5M and they are budgeting \$6.4M. Is this both Ordinance 25 and Ordinance 60 or only Ordinance 60? Mr. Lawrence

explained that Ordinance 60 is the freeze program which makes up the totals presented. This year applications were waived so anyone who qualified in 2017 and was due for a re-up this year automatically qualified. Traditionally applicants need to re-up every 2 years. Thus, they will not lose anyone from the program unless they pass on. Realistically, the number from this year to next may minimally increase because no one will be lost. Ms. Falusi commented that Ordinance 25 is tax deferment for low income. Mr. Lawrence explained that they do not have many deferrals and they are all paid back anyway.

Ms. Falusi asked where people can call for services and learn information. Some who do not use technology may normally see information posted at Town Hall or the library. How are those people being reached during the pandemic? Mr. Watt responded that a spring newsletter was mailed from the rec department and information is posted on the website. Ms. Bellody added that the information is included in the senior newsletter. Additionally, anyone who comes through the door is screened. Further, they call people and try to keep track of people who may be eligible for any program and follow up. Ms. Nuccio added flyers are sent to every household.

Ms. Falusi commented that Mr. Rosen's budget does not mention the current health pandemic. Where are they paying from the budget for items such as sneeze shields, signage in Town Hall, the changes in the library, and cleaning. Mr. Rosen responded that the updated budget in the May 26<sup>th</sup> packet includes an addressing of the pandemic in a few areas including: the Town Manager's Budget Memo, Town Manager's Budget Message, revised budget book pages, and the fund balance analysis by the Finance Director included it as well which will supplement the budget book. Thus, in the revised budget messages there are 3 or 4 mentions of COVID as well as in the memo preceding the list of reductions. Further, it has been mentioned in all of the budget presentations and on the town's website. Mr. Rosen noted that he spoke to the resident who posed this question. Mr. Rosen noted that expenses for items such as cleaning, germ guards, and Zoom licenses are being funded by the Emergency Declaration Fund. The intent is when they are reimbursed the fund will be replenished.

Ms. Falusi commented that they have a number of upcoming new committees and/or task forces. She expressed concern that there are not any budget items for these and funding and grants may not be available. How will they ensure they have the funds and resources needed? Mr. Rosen responded that such committees need to be established. In this budget they are not listed as having committee expenses. Anything administrative is coordinated through the Town Manager's office at no cost. Many of the town's commissions and committees do not have staff or a budget. If a commission determines a budget is needed it would have to present it to the Council and a line item would need to be created or be built into the following year's budget. Ms. Nuccio commented that when creating the Commission on Disabilities the intent was education and learning what resources are available. The Commission has not yet started its initial research to gather information. The Commission is not dollar driven. It is about education and inclusivity. Ms. Falusi commented that they will need to meet on Zoom and if they do at some point meet in person they will need to clean before and after each meeting; thus, there would be some expenses and more added to Public Works.

Ms. Falusi asked if there will be a summer reading program at the library. Ms. Pettijohn responded that they will have online/virtual summer reading programs and they have funds for small prizes. She booked programs in February but unless they can be done outside she is unsure if they can be offered. Ms. Falusi asked if the programs could be done via Zoom. Ms. Pettijohn said it would be possible and she will discuss with the foundation about getting the library a Zoom account. Ms. Falusi asked if people have trouble with their home internet if they can access the library's internet while sitting in their car outside of the library. Ms. Pettijohn responded that they may do so.

Ms. Falusi commented that the food assistance program serving breakfast and lunch will end when school closes. There are many families relying on this convenience and being able to stretch their dollar. Are there

any plans for food assistance during the summer? Ms. Nuccio noted that the food bank is still open. Ms. Bellody added that they are still receiving donations and they are giving out food vouchers and gift certificates to local stores. Dr. Willett commented that the US Senate is considering another emergency funding bill for school nutrition programs. This would allow them to continue providing meals through the USDA. It is unclear however if the Senate will pass this.

Mr. Jones asked how many individuals have applied to the tax deferment program and the deadline for application. Ms. Hancock responded that they have 6 applications and the deadline is July 1, 2020. Mr. Jones asked if there is a projection as to how many homes with crumbling foundations may be added back to the tax rolls. Mr. Lawrence explained that it is zero. They do not phase anyone back in. If one is on the grand list as of last October then it is reduction for the coming year. He has 5-6 applications right now and they would be reduced next year. Thus, there will not be any additions or reductions to the grand list. A full year reduction is provided.

Mr. Luba commented that the Town Council, Mr. Rosen, and Dr. Willett have worked arduously for the staff and employees to ensure they are gainfully employed and minimize the impact this incident has had on them.

In regard to the budget, Mr. Luba as the Birch Grove liaison expressed concern with a couple of items that are being proposed. This is specifically about the Birch Grove project under the BOE's purview. If two items remain in the budget as they are now they could create recurring costs. The first item is the cost of the security guard and the second is the expense for moving. These are one-time expenses but as they stand now they are part of the overall BOE budget. Mr. Luba commented that if the BOE finds it to be appropriate the Council reduce the BOE budget by \$100K and transfer it to the town so the moving cost and security guard would still be covered and not create a continuing expense that would increase the overall budget since this is a one-time expense for both items. Ms. Nuccio explained that there is \$100K in Birch Grove Project expenses (not operating) in the BOE budget. The BOE budget should be truly operating expenses. She understands there is approximately \$49K for moving expenses. Last year they created the Birch Grove Non-Grant Capital Account of which there is \$50K remaining. She agrees they could reduce the BOE budget by \$100K and not impact services. The expenses would slide to the town side where the Birch Grove Project expenses are being tracked. The other expense would be the security guard who was specifically hired for the Birch Grove portables. At a joint meeting Dr. Willett brought up SROs and the Board's budget for the SROs would stay the same. If an SRO were to be added it would be independent of the Birch Grove Project resource. This transfer would allow them to use the fund as it was designed and put the Birch Grove expenses where they belong. Mr. Luba was in agreement and believes it is the prudent thing to do and it would then not become a recurring BOE line item. Mr. Luba noted that the security guard was state mandated.

Mr. Luba commented that 2 e-mails have been received regarding the senior tax credit. This is established by Ordinance 60 and the Council's decisions, short of changing that Ordinance, cannot affect it in any way. Ms. Nuccio confirmed that this is accurate. The adjustment is made to the net grand list. It is not a budget item and is ordinance-bound.

Mr. Luba commented that at the joint meeting the BOE broached the subject of having a contingency fund and he would like this to be discussed as it could be incorporated as part of the budget. Ms. Nuccio reviewed the list provided by Dr. Willett at the joint meeting and noted that based on this there would be \$160,526 to go into the COVID contingency fund. Ms. Nuccio noted that she was unsure if the \$45K in capital items has been included. She understands that the fund would be used for expenses to reopen schools or COVID-related items. At the joint meeting it was discussed that it would not be used for recurring expenses. It may be used to add staff hours but not additional hires. Ms. Nuccio would be amenable to this and



recommended having a 1 year limit. It could then be reviewed after the 1 year. Funds that are not spent would go back to the fund balance.

Ms. Falusi commented that for the unexpended costs she would be more comfortable if something was included in the packet. Dr. Willett noted that there is an updated version of the document and it is posted on the website and the most recent BOE packet. He explained that the SRO was paid for this year out of operating. There has been a discussion about making the SRO full time but right now the structure is for 2 twenty four hour positions. If the \$45K comes out of operating the BOE would likely not have enough for a full time SRO. Dr. Willett believed that based on a presentation to the Town Council that having a full time SRO was something that was being looked at as a positive and is just part of the evolution of the conversation. Ms. Nuccio shared and reviewed the updated document on screen. In regard to the \$45K for the capital projects, Dr. Willett will pull it out before he creates the final document. Ms. Nuccio commented that she is in support of putting funds into the ERF this year because they do not know what may be needed from a technological perspective. Dr. Willett noted that the numbers are in flux until June 30<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Hancock confirmed that the contingency fund could be set up at any time and recommended an ordinance is set up similar to how the ERF was created.

Mr. Luba inquired if the intent is not to create a permanent recurring fund and one that is short term if one would need an ordinance or could it be set aside as part of this budget. Ms. Hancock recommended going through the public hearing process to provide transparency and ensure it is in a formal process.

Mr. Luba commented on the issues of the purchase of the fire truck that was included in the public safety proposal. Based on available funds it could still be covered without going for bonding and he would like to discuss this. His position is if they could find a way to include this in the budget and use upfront money and stay with a zero mill rate he would like to do so. Mr. Rosen clarified that the fire truck was funded through the 2019/2020 budget. It would not need to be put back in the budget. They have a funding source which is debt/bonding. The funding source can be addressed at a future Council meeting. It would not be built into the budget other than for debt projections and fund balance analysis. Ms. Falusi commented that the Fire Chief expressed concern that the longer this process took the higher the cost. Is there concern that they will not get all that they wanted for the \$750K? Ms. Nuccio commented that she believed Chief Littell was already researching this. Chief Littell commented that he was given direction to bid the fire truck and reviewed where he is at in the process. They have decided on going with one of two manufacturers but with COVID there has been an increase in prices as well as in delays in regard to building.

Ms. Nuccio proposed bringing in the new firefighter/EMT in January 2021 rather than April 2021. They are looking at a delta of approximately \$15K which she believes is nominal in comparison to the service provided and would be an opportunity to receive revenue from the ambulance. The revenue is set aside for public safety. Mr. Luba commented that he would support this recommendation. Chief Littell explained that the goal is to build a squad for the town to maximize personnel. The revenue is over \$450K/year. Chief Littell commented that he would not have any problem bringing the firefighter/EMT in early. Mr. Rosen noted that they are in philosophical agreement that more firefighters/EMTs are needed in town. Additionally, if the additional hire allows the Fire Marshal to do inspections then revenue can be generated.

In regard to using \$600K from the general fund, Ms. Nuccio commented that if possible she would like to tap the tax stabilization fund for \$115K and take \$500K from the general fund. This would leave \$110K in the tax stabilization fund for next year if needed. Ms. Hancock noted that the tax stabilization fund balance is \$225K and yes, the \$115K may be taken out to alleviate some of the burden on the general fund. The impact will be the same but it would be another source rather than taking it all from fund balance. Mr. Rosen explained that the tax stabilization fund and the general fund are both cash for all intents and purposes. If the proposal passed tonight to use the tax stabilization fund, they would ask to allocate the \$115K and move any

additional fund balance at the end of the year to offset expenditures. Thus, the tax stabilization fund would be used first. Mr. Schenher noted that he fully supports this. This is an apropos time to use the fund.

Mr. Rosen's proposal is a 0% mill rate increase.

Ms. Nuccio reviewed the original proposal.

Ms. Nuccio reviewed the possible changes that have been discussed:

- reduce the BOE budget \$100K and move the Birch Grove related expenses to the town side
- consider the creation of a COVID expense fund for the schools for next year with a time limit
- changing the hire date of a firefighter/EMT from April to January
- reducing the fund usage to \$500K and utilizing \$115K of the tax stabilization fund to maintain the zero mill rate increase

Mr. Jones motioned to move \$100K from the Board of Education budget to the Birch Grove Non-Grant Capital Account.

Mr. Schenher seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Willett clarified the \$100K and inquired what exactly is being offset. Ms. Nuccio explained that this would be approximately \$49K of Birch Grove related moving expenses. The additional amount is for the security guard. Dr. Willett reviewed the numbers:

BGP packing	\$11,000
BGP moving vehicle	\$4,500
BGP moving expenses	\$14,000
BGP snow removal	\$4,368
Subtotal	\$33,868
Security officer	\$45,162
Total	\$79,030

Mr. Rosen explained the extra \$20K may go toward offsetting other BGP expenses and he understand there may be some unanticipated and ineligible expenses for the Birch Grove portables portion of the project.

Ms. Nuccio reviewed the numbers:

BGP misc. expenses for occupying school	\$15,000
BGP moving labor expenditures	\$14,000
BGP moving vehicle rental	\$4,500
BGP packing and materials	\$11,000
BGP snow removal labor	\$4,368
Subtotal	\$48,868

A straw poll was taken: Are you in support of looking at the creation of a COVID fund with unexpended funds from the Board of Education this year?

Straw Poll Results: All members were in favor of this.

Mr. Luba will draft a motion and send it to Mr. Rosen to share with the Council members.

Mr. Jones motioned to move the hire date of the public safety officer to January 1, 2021.

Ms. Falusi seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Jones motioned to use \$115K of the tax stabilization fund and make the reduction thereof to the unassigned fund balance that was projected to be used for this budget.

Mr. Schenher seconded the motion.  
A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Rosen reviewed the numbers:

Category	Amount	Reason
Town Government	\$12,372,640	Moving public safety officer hire date
Board of Education	\$40,017,290	\$100K moved to Capital
Debt Service	\$ 4,600,000	No change
Capital	\$ 192,567	\$100K moved from Board of Education
Total	\$57,182,497	

**6. Approval of Budget Resolution**

Mr. Jones motioned to authorize the following resolution:

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

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Tolland Town Council that it hereby adopts a FY 2020-21 Town Operating and Capital Budget in the amount of \$57,182,497 to be appropriated as follows:

CATEGORY	AMOUNT
Town Government	\$12,372,640
Board of Education	\$40,017,290
Debt Service	\$ 4,600,000
Capital	\$ 192,567
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$57,182,497</b>

Said appropriations shall require no increase to the mill rate of 36.05.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Town Manager, pursuant to the requirements of the Town Charter, is authorized to advertise this budgetary outlay as part of the June 17, 2020, Remote Annual Budget Presentation Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Schenher seconded the motion.  
A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

**7. Reminder – June 17, 2020 – Annual Budget Presentation  
June 25, 2020 – Council Adopts Budget and Sets Mill Rate**

**8. Adjournment**

Mr. Jones motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m.  
Ms. Falusi seconded the motion.  
A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

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Tammy Nuccio, Council Chair