

**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
TOLLAND TOWN COUNCIL  
HICKS MEMORIAL MUNICIPAL CENTER  
6<sup>th</sup> FLOOR COUNCIL ROOM  
MARCH 13, 2019**

**Present:** Bill Eccles, Dave Skoczulek, John Reagan, Paul Reynolds, Tammy Nuccio, Christine Vincent and Brenda Falusi

**Also Present:** Steven Werbner, Town Manager  
Michael Wilkinson, Director of Administrative Services  
Kevin Eklund, Admin. Resident Trooper  
Lori Sherwood, Secretary Law Enforcement  
Tina Binheimer, ACO  
Heidi Samokar, Director of Planning and Community Development  
Lisa Hancock, Director of Finance and Records  
Scott Lappen, Public Works Director  
Bruce Watt, Recreation Director  
Jason Lawrence, Assessor  
Sheila Bailey, Town Clerk  
Chris Jordan, Asst. Finance Director  
Jim Paquin, Building Official  
Barbara Pettijohn, Director of Library Services  
John Littell, Director of Public Safety  
Michelle Manas, Collector of Revenue

Meeting called to order at 7:02 pm.

Town Manager Steven Werbner started the meeting by talking about the three year revenue comparison with the Governor's numbers. He then talked about the potential adjustment in State Aid. The impact of the FY20 Governor's Adjusted Budget would be a decrease in revenue of \$570,437 and an additional \$100,136 in payments for Teacher retirement. He used a figure for ECS in the amount of \$8,866,871. He stated another potential change in State Aid is the payment of the (TAR) and (LOCIP) Grants totaling a decrease of \$19,171. Including full BOE budget, the overall tax increase is 5.43% on an overall budget increase of 2.81% which includes \$1,577,979 in additional expenditures. Impact of Governor's budget on the Town Mill Rate is a .79 mill increase or 2.26%. Only addition to the Town budget is the funding of the Town Engineer position.

The Town Manager went into a discussion on the foundation issue at Birch Grove School:

**BIRCH GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Foundation impacted by the presence of Pyrrhotite

Structural Engineer has determined that the crumbling foundation is impacting the integrity of the steel support columns of the building.

The Structural Engineer as well as the School Facilities Unit of the State of Connecticut has stated that the school should not be occupied in the next school session and that planning for the replacement of the school should start immediately.

The only option to address the structural concerns of the school based on its size and method of construction is to demolish the existing structure and replace as new.

The State of Ct has granted this project emergency status which provides us with 52% reimbursement of costs as well as allows for the waiving of certain bidding requirements to speed up the process.

Estimated cost at this point is 46 million dollars which again will be offset by 52% reimbursement from the State of Connecticut and possible additional federal assistance. It is hoped that with final design the cost estimate will be lessened.

Planning work has commenced to determine suitable temporary classroom arrangements for the next school year

Estimated time of design and construction is two years. **FOR THE SAFETY OF THOSE OCCUPYING BIRCH GROVE SCHOOL THIS REMIDIAL WORK MUST BE PERFORMED. THE STATE OF CT AS WELL AS LOCAL SCHOOL STAFF HAVE DETERMINED THERE IS NO ROOM AVAILABLE TO HOUSE STUDENTS ATTENDING BIRCH GROVE SCHOOL AT ANY OF OUR EXISTING SCHOOL FACILITIES WITHOUT ADDITIONS. TO ALLOW WORK TO PROCEED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE A REFERNDUM WILL BE NECESSARY ON May 7, 2019 TO ALLOCATE THE FULL 46 MILLION DOLLARS WHICH WILL BE OFFSET BY THE RECEIPT OF STATE OR FEDERAL GRANTS. SHOULD THE TOWN BE RESPONSIBLE FOR 48% OF THE COST OUR DEBT SERVICE WILL INCREASE STARTING IN 2021 AND DEPENDING ON BORROWING OPTIONS SHOW INCREASES FOR EITHER THE NEXT FOUR OR FIVE YEARS. MAGNITUDE OF THE INCREASES IS \$100,000-\$600,000 ON A YEARLY BASIS AGAIN DEPENDING UPON THE FINAL BORROWING SCHEDULE**

**THIS BUDGET MAINTAINS THE FOLLOWING:**

One free bulky waste enjoyed by approximately 1600 residents last October at a cost of \$28,588. The four resident troopers of which two were added back in to this fiscal year. Cost for the four troopers is budgeted at \$717,000. Based on recent personnel changes an additional \$45,000 will have to be added to this cost.

The Town Manager went through the amounts needed to get down to certain budget levels below the 5.43% tax increase. To get to 3% requires \$1,081,517 in cuts; 2% requires \$1,526,847,

The current unassigned fund balance amount of \$7,779,132 assumes that in the last quarter of this fiscal year \$393,340 will be allocated to the BOE 1% reserve fund and \$634,857 allocated to the capital projects fund for BOE capital projects.

The Town Manager also talked about the concern of a high mill rate in comparison to the other Towns.

Throughout the presentation there were questions from Town Council members and statements of residents on the following topics: Town Engineer position; grand list; revaluation; teacher retirement funding; mill rate with adjustments; State police statistics; Public Works budget and renovations; save public safety from budget cuts; Town needs more development.

Meeting adjourned at 8:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Wilkinson  
Director of Administrative Services