

TOLLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hicks Municipal Center  
Council Chambers  
Tolland, CT 06084

REGULAR MEETING – January 27, 2016

Members Present: Mr. Sam Adlerstein, Chair; Mr. Patrick Doyle, Vice Chair; Ms. Kathy Gorsky, Secretary; Ms. Karen Moran, Ms. Colleen Yudichak, Ms. Susan Seaver, Ms. Harrold, Mr. Robert Pagoni, and Mr. Jeff Schroeder.

Administrators Present: Dr. Walter Willett, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Mark McLaughlin, Business Manager; Kathleen Raymond, Director, Pupil Services and Special Education; Adam Sher, Director, Technology; Peter Sztaba, Director, Facilities; Carolyn Tyl, Director of Curriculum; Trooper Corradi, SRO; Resident Trooper McCarthy; Dominique Fox, Principal, THS; Margot Martello, Assistant Principal, THS; Dr. Kathryn Eidson, Assistant Principal, THS; Daniel Uriano, Principal, TMS; Anthony Spangle, Assistant Principal, TMS; James Dineen, Principal, TIS; Jonathan Cop, Assistant Principal, TIS; Tom Swanson, Principal, Birch Grove; Patricia Hess, Assistant Principal, Birch Grove

A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Adlerstein called the meeting to order at 7:32 P.M. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The order of the agenda was as follows: A – E, I, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, and N

B. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Steven Boyer, 32 Skungamaug Road and owner of The Country Butcher and Spring Hill Farm, spoke in favor of continued support for the culinary program at THS and TMS. As a business owner in the food business, he sees direct benefits of the program. He applauds the district for starting and continuing the program and enjoys working with the students. They are eager and want to be involved. Mr. Boyer believes there will be a huge demand for those with an understanding of the basics of food, preparation, and nutrition which the students learn. The program teaches cooking, leadership, and math skills as well as chemistry and students from the program have been accepted to prestigious culinary schools. As a business owner and parent, he fully supports the program.

Mr. Adlerstein asked the students in attendance to share something about the program. Ben Boyer explained that he has enjoyed the experience and culinary is his career choice. Nick Boyer commented that he has always had a passion for food but the culinary program gave him the spark to know that he wants to become a chef and someday teach students food science and nutrition as well. Madeline Jurgensmier noted that initially she took the class as part of her requirements but has learned so much including the art of making pastries and baking. This experience has helped determine her career path.

Mr. Adlerstein thanked everyone including the teacher, Ms. Lauren DeBlois, for their commitment to the culinary arts program.

C. POINTS OF INFORMATION

Mr. Pagoni commented that he has had lunches at THS and the meal, service, and hosts are always fabulous and he supports the program.

Mr. Adlerstein noted that he too has had lunch at THS and was impressed with the quality and presentation of the food. The program provides real life experience and is a reminder that there are many different paths that one can take. He thanked everyone for taking the time to come and remind all of everything the program offers.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT – Charles Perosino and Andrew Harger

Mr. Harger noted that today was the first day of the second semester at THS and the Snowball Dance is coming up on February 19<sup>th</sup>. The THS musical, *Joe and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, will be performed on March 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> and the Mr. THS event will be held the following week.

Mr. Perosino noted two issues that students would like addressed. First, there is student concern that in the lunch line milk is available but water bottles are not – they are in a different location. Second, the students would like more leniency in the add/drop policy given the many factors involved.

E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Adlerstein asked that Troopers Corradi and McCarthy speak about the SRO program and provide pertinent information.

Trooper Corradi has been a Tolland Resident Trooper for approximately 6 years and was selected to be the SRO for the 4 schools in the district. He provided each Board member with a report which includes statistics and highlights from the last academic year and he can provide recent statistics as well. He has enjoyed working with the 9 administrators and staff over the past year and a half and has developed good rapport with each of them as well as the students and parents in each of the four schools. Although there are some people who have been upset with some decisions that have been made by him and/or the administration, they have always come to a resolution which included satisfying the parents. Whenever possible, administrators try to handle situations in house and when it is a criminal matter, Trooper Corradi becomes involved and they work together.

Trooper Corradi has worked with Dr. Willett and Chief Littell to update all of the emergency plans for the schools. This year, with the input of the administrators, the fire department, and Dr. Willett, they have developed a plan/flip chart which will be distributed to every administrator and posted in each classroom. This chart provides information for what to do in a variety of scenarios.

Additionally, Trooper Corradi mentors some students and meets regularly with others in different schools. In some cases it has been in regard to truancy while in others it has been in regard to legal matters. Students are able to speak with him privately and if it is something that he needs to address with the administrators, he does so. He tries to make situations learning experiences for the students rather than a criminal or negative experience. He believes in helping kids move on – everyone makes mistakes.

Mr. Adlerstein inquired what it is like in the schools now in comparison to prior to having an SRO. Trooper McCarthy, who has been in Town for 20 years, responded. Prior to the SRO program, he worked with Dr. Willett at TMS and ran the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and high school DARE programs with four troopers. The DARE program was lost. He understands the budget but that being said, someone is 100% needed at the school. In town, there are 2 troopers on

day shift and 2 troopers on evening shift. Prior to the SRO program, during the day shift the troopers were frequently called to THS for items such as marijuana, fighting, and other matters. By having Trooper Corradi in the role of SRO – this ended these problems. A trooper does not need to be pulled off the road to go to the schools. Having an officer in the school is a must and he is working on another way to fit it into the budget. It has to be done.

Mr. Adlerstein thanked Trooper McCarthy for framing the issue and noted that it is a financial issue.

E.1. Superintendent's Proposed Budget (no enclosure)

Mr. Adlerstein provided an overview of Dr. Willett's five key categories: curriculum and instruction; facility maintenance; technology; culture and climate; logistics.

Dr. Willett reviewed the budget numbers with the business manager and the administrators and submitted a list of reductions that reduces the budget but allows the district to retain the administrator position which was a concern. With all of the reductions, this brings the proposed 2016/2017 budget to 2.99%. The focus on math and language arts is still intact as well as the curriculum programs. There is still \$80K available in the line item for the SRO. The reductions were presented to the Board for its review and are summarized below:

*Step 1*

Public Safety account reduction: \$45K

Curriculum reduction: \$66K

SRO reduction: \$80K

ACA reduction: \$32K

Diesel rate reduction: \$95K

ECHIP credit back: \$25,142

OPEB reduction per actuarial: \$91,753

*Step 2 – Personnel*

Birch Grove: 2 K-2 teachers

TIS: 2 K-5 teachers

TMS: 2 teachers

THS: 2.5 teachers

1 Class III secretary

Total: 9.5

Dr. Willett provided general information about the reductions. He noted that end-of-year funds, if available, will be used to acquire curriculum items for next year and the requirement for ACA funding has been postponed to 2020. In regard to personnel, an additional K2 teaching position will be taken rather than the Birch Grove assistant principal position. Enrollment is down significantly and the classes are much smaller. He added that he received a strong feeling from the Town that the 2.99% will have a good possibility of passing at referendum and the modifications still allow the district to continue with its critical vision and goals and execute the best possible scenarios for education in Tolland.

Ms. Gorsky applauded Dr. Willett and the administration for all of the work put into the budget. There are many positive changes that will allow them to bring a number to the town which can hopefully be sustained without a significant impact to the children. Mr. Doyle thanked everyone as well. He expressed concern about what would happen if there were not sufficient end-of-year funds to cover purchasing the needed curriculum. Dr. Willett responded that it would have an impact on the implementation of the math and language arts objectives but would not bring it to a halt. He believes the funds will be available. Mr. Doyle noted that while there is declining enrollment, students still need to make choices for classes and asked Dr. Willett about the programmatic impact. Dr. Willett noted that there has been a lot of effort to make the negative impact as small as possible. There will be an impact but it can be better mitigated than alternative impacts.

Mr. Adlerstein asked how the reductions would affect the 5 categories. Dr. Willett explained that the curriculum will continue to move forward and facilities and maintenance are not being shortchanged. Appropriate preventative maintenance will be done – significantly more is expended when emergencies arise. While technology will take a hit, progress will still be made and programs for culture and climate will still be supported. Logistics, including student management software will still be able to be executed. Dr. Willett does not like losing staff but a budget passing at 2.99% is exponentially better than a budget passing at 1% or 0% which would have a very adverse effect.

Mr. Adlerstein asked if there was a surplus at the end of 2015/2016, how it would be used. Dr. Willett explained that it would be spent on curriculum. If there was an excess amount, he recommended looking at the 1% fund. A much larger windfall would allow him to look at how to build programs and add math and literacy coaches. Technology would also be considered.

Mr. Pagoni inquired if Dr. Willett has discussed other scenarios in regard to the SRO. Dr. Willett has but added that it would be premature to discuss details at this time. He has spoken with 6 other districts and some of the Board members. Mr. Pagoni asked when the Board would have a chance to evaluate those scenarios. He wants to be sure the public has a chance to provide input. Dr. Willett explained that the Board's vote on the budget, in regard to the SRO line item, would empower him to find a solution for the district relative to what the district wants to do with the position moving forward.

Mr. Adlerstein proposed moving item I to this point. It was taken on consent. There were no public comments.

The administrators were provided with an opportunity to weigh in on the budget's impact at their respective schools. Ms. Fox commented that it is difficult to answer since they are not yet in the course registration process. It is always a challenge when a position is lost but the school will offer the best programs it can. At TMS, the current level of programming will be sustained as well as the critical priorities of the district. The teaming model will be maintained as well as math-in-focus and other programs. TMS will move forward and can sustain what it currently has. At TIS, the staff reduction is due to declining enrollment and will have an impact on the teaming structure. The

current programs can be sustained and they will be able to move forward in preparing for readers' workshop. At Birch Grove, Mr. Swanson explained that the reduction is aligned with declining enrollment but the programs and curriculum will continue to be sustained and move forward.

Ms. Raymond, in regard to special education, explained that while many of the costs are fixed, there are many unknowns such as agency placements. In any case, they need to look at the individual needs of the students they are servicing. Mr. Tyl commented that the reduction in staff and in turn less support will make it difficult for the curriculum team to do what it wants to do. More support with curriculum and instruction is needed but they will do the best job they can. Mr. Sher noted that there are large needs from a technology perspective both in terms of hardware and software. He hopes that from a capital perspective they can put better tools in the hands of the students and staff. Mr. Sztaba explained that the budget will allow them to do more preventative maintenance rather than reactionary work which comes at a higher cost. The budget he proposed is a good faith attempt to get to a point where they can do what is necessary to improve the standard of comfort and the correct preventative maintenance however there are always unknowns.

Mr. Doyle commented that the district has cut positions 2 years in a row and one of the priorities is culture and climate. He asked if from an administrative perspective if the district is gaining ground or if there other things the Board should be discussing to move culture and climate forward. Dr. Willett explained that it is a PBIS district and they are looking at other programs. There has been a lot of forward progress in this area.

The Board will vote on the budget at the next meeting. Dr. Willett does not foresee any changes or proposals but will not be able to provide a comprehensive plan for the SRO line item before that time. Mr. Pagoni expressed concern that the Board will be asked to vote on the budget which includes this line item. How can it explain to the public how it voted if it does not know what is in the SRO line item? The Board has responsibility for oversight. A brief discussion took place including the importance of the Board having oversight of how the funds in the line item are spent.

The global object page of the budget will be revised with the information presented this evening and posted online. A consensus check\* was done with the following results: 3, 4, 3, 3.5, 4, 4. (Ms. Gorsky left prior to the consensus check).

*\*Consensus Check as displayed at the meeting*

- *Question: What is your level of support for \_\_\_\_\_? Each person responds by showing a fist or a number of fingers that corresponds to their opinion.*
- *Fist A no vote – I need to talk more on the proposal and require significant changes.*
- *1 Finger I still need to discuss certain issues and suggest changes that should be made.*
- *2 Fingers I am more comfortable with the proposal but would like to discuss some minor issues.*
- *3 Fingers I'm not in total agreement but feel comfortable to let this decision or a proposal pass without further discussion.*
- *4 Fingers I think it's a good idea/decision and will work for it.*
- *5 Fingers It's a great idea and I will be one of the leaders in implementing it.*
- *When fewer than three fingers ... group learn from that member the objections & suggestions that would make it a 3.*

Dr. Willett noted that he appreciates the hard work the Board has done both with the budget and in working with the community. There have been many community budget workshops going back to October. Seven meetings were held including open public sessions and the work done at these meetings has given the district the best chance to continue with the district's vision and goals. A good faith effort has been made to present a budget that will pass at referendum while still upholding the interests expressed by the Board and the programs and staff needed to keep the schools on their highly successful path.

F. COMMITTEE AND LIAISON REPORTS

Finance and Facilities – the February 1<sup>st</sup> meeting has been cancelled

G. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT - none

H. BOARD ACTION - none

I. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

J. POINTS OF INFORMATION - none

K. CORRESPONDENCE - none

L. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Budget discussion

M. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Schroeder motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:16PM. Mr. Doyle seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Pascuzzi  
Clerk