

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

Meeting is In-Person for those who wish to attend and will also be offered through Zoom for those who wish to attend remotely

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

January 26, 2022

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86358441213?pwd=dUJPbnVDV3BoZW1MT1ZJZ1F1K21XZz09>

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=dUJPbnVDV3BoZW1MT1ZJZ1F1K21XZz09>

A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

B. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- January 5, 2022
- January 12, 2022

D. 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.

E. CORRESPONDENCE

F. POINTS OF INFORMATION

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

H. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- H.1 2022-2023 School Calendar (First Read)
- H.2 Legislative Breakfast (CABE)
- H.3 Superintendent's Proposed Budget (no enclosure)

I. COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

J. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

K. BOARD ACTION

L. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (2-minute limit)

Comments must be limited to items on this agenda.

M. POINTS OF INFORMATION

Tolland Town Council – January 11, 2022

N. FUTURE

O. NEW BUSINESS

P. ADJOURNMENT

TOLLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION
Zoom or In-Person Meeting

REGULAR MEETING – January 5, 2022

Members Present via zoom: Ashley Lundgren, Chair; Sofia Shaikh, Vice Chair; Christine Griffin, Tony Holt, Dana Philbin, Christina Plourd, Jayden Regisford

Members Absent: Jacob Marie, Secretary; Jennifer Gallichant

Administrators Present via zoom: Dr. Walter Willett, Superintendent of Schools

Also present via zoom: Attorney Jessica Ritter, Shipman & Goodwin, LLP

A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Lundgren called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

B. Attorney Ritter gave a PowerPoint presentation on the legal roles and responsibilities of a board of education.

c. ADJOURNMENT

Christina Plourd motioned to adjourn at 8:30 PM.

Jayden Regisford seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

All were in favor. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Ritter
Attorney, Shipman & Goodwin

TOLLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION
Zoom or In-Person Meeting

REGULAR MEETING – January 12, 2022

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

Members Absent: none

Administrators Present: Dr. Walter Willett, Superintendent of Schools

A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Lundgren called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

B. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA – n/a

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- December 8, 2021

Mr. Marie motioned to approve the minutes of the December 8th meeting.

Mr. Holt seconded the motion.

Changes: Replace “Sofia Shaikh” with “Sophia Shaikh” under Members Present and anywhere else in error.

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

E. CORRESPONDENCE

- E-mail sharing the Surgeon General’s recently issued advisory on youth mental health
- E-mail expressing concerns about the CIAC’s COVID mitigation policies; request that a survey on mask wearing be conducted by the district after the winter season
- E-mail sharing information about the CT Grown 4 CT Kids grant that the district could apply for
- E-mail asking if the district is considering a remote learning option for January or remote learning for January
- E-mail sharing an article about current challenges facing educators
- E-mail expressing concern over a lack of discussion about student performance; author believes this is critical to evaluating the success of educational programs
- E-mail expressing frustration that his child has to quarantine after a close contact with a COVID positive case despite testing negative; author asked that the policy be revisited

F. POINTS OF INFORMATION

- Ms. Plourd commented that she thought the schools were no longer doing contact tracing and that a close contact would not be quarantined. If there are situations where a child could be quarantined despite testing negative, she would like to know what they are quarantined. Dr. Willett responded that out of school close contacts are still

quarantined for 5 days. Ms. Plourd asked if this would be heard from the health district (EHHHD) or the school nurse. Dr. Willett responded that they would hear from both. The district may learn it from the EHHD or a parent/guardian.

- Mr. Holt commented that the Council decided last night to go fully remote. He understands that Town Hall is still open and asked if the Board will be able to continue its hybrid format. Dr. Willett responded that in terms of rules, there is no reason for them not to continue in the hybrid format. The Implementer Bill has the stipulation that allows the Board to continue to meet in the hybrid model.

G. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT – Nathalie Mitchell and Emily Pereira - none

H. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

H.1 Monthly Financial Report

Dr. Willett reviewed attachment H.1.

The December 2021 financial report shows an available balance of \$278,423 or .68% of the BOE's current budget.

Dr. Willett highlighted line items including the following:

- Salaries (110) – overbudget, additional staff including ESY, reimbursement
- Substitutes (120) – still incurring; typical; increased use
- Overtime (130) – cannot be encumbered; under budget; expect to incur
- Stipends (150) – over budget; pay to play fund will continue to be collected through year end
- Health/Benefits (190, 200, 210) – collectively under budget; ongoing
- FICA/MED/Soc Sec (220) – continue to be driven by new hires
- Retirement/Reimbursement/Unemployment (240, 250, 260) – under budget; will continue to go down
- Benefits/WorkComp (270, 310) – under budget
- Legal/Audit/Tech (340, 350) – under budget; will be incurred as year goes on
- Maint/Cleaning/Repair (420, 430) – continued spending as year progresses
- Transportation (510) – overbudget; special education
- Sped Ed Tuition (560) – over budget; services are back and increased; expected to be over budget
- Energy (620) - USIF; funds transferred at the beginning of the year
- Textbooks (640) – curriculum coordinators are planning expenditures
- Inst Supp/Equip (600, 610, 690, 730) - collectively under budget; will continue to be incurred

Mr. Marie asked if they expect the Substitute line to be over budget with all of the absences. Dr. Willett responded that he does not think they will be over but they will expend quite a bit of it. He added that many substitutes are sick as well, but staff are doing an incredible job and stepping up.

Mr. Holt asked about Transportation. Given the continuing challenges with bussing, he asked if they are seeing any relief on this line item. Dr. Willett explained that right now they are not seeing a tremendous opportunity for savings but there is a cycle, and they will be speaking with First Student. The majority of buses are running even though routes have been combined due to a lack of drivers. In turn

drivers have to cover more. Mr. Holt explained that given x number of students and y number of miles, there should be a formula for this. If they are combining routes and increasing the amount of time students are on the buses, he would think the charge would not be the same and there would be a fiscal response to the challenges.

H.2 Superintendent's Proposed Budget (no enclosure – provided in meeting)

Dr. Willett noted that the document will be posted on the Budget page after the meeting.

Dr. Willett reviewed the timeline and noted that a workshop will be held on January 19th. Administrators and cost center managers will be in attendance to answer questions. After the workshop, the community will have an opportunity to view a presentation and ask questions as well. The BOE dashboard has a link for Board members to submit questions. A link to the budget information and form where the public may submit questions is available on the Superintendent's Page:

http://tps.sharpschool.net/DistrictOffices/superintendent/superintendent_willett_s_page.

In about a month the Board will vote on its budget and the Superintendent will submit it to the Town.

Superintendent's Proposed Budget 2022-2023: \$42,837,400; increase of 4.94% (\$2,018,111)

Driving factors:

- Bargaining unit adjustments from negotiations
 - Negotiations were reasonable
 - Second and third year of contracts
 - Almost 50% of the budget increase
- Transportation
 - Typical transportation expense: \$53K (approximate)
 - Special Education Transportation: \$300K+
 - Approximately 15% of the budget increase
- Instructional Equipment - Technology Initiative
 - Planned replacement cycle for Chromebooks (first rotation)
 - Approximately \$50K/incoming grade; Cumulatively \$150-200K.
- Technology Services
 - Restoration of items (example would be subscriptions that are ending) where investments were made for offset. Example: math program +\$56K but the prior year was \$96K and now is \$105K so while the increase is comparatively \$9K, it appears to be \$56K.

Positions were added to the Superintendent's budget but overall, the FTE decreased.

Some of the positions were grant-funded and are now in the operations budget.

Additionally, new mandates necessitate additional staff for coverage.

- Facilities worker (.6)
 - TPS workers are talented and often have certifications (i.e., electrician, master key) so the district has options regarding bringing in vendors to address issues. This would increase facilities effectiveness and allow for cost avoidance opportunities.

- Social Studies Teacher (THS)
 - CT Public Act 19-12 provided that all districts offer a Black and Latino U.S. History (USBLH) Class to students. The class will be offered next year and is in the catalog.
 - If a teacher is not hired, they will have to pull teachers off classes currently in place and some current course offerings could be lost.
- School Counselor (TMS)
 - During this time there is a consistent theme of students needing the assistance of social emotional support.
 - A grant was acquired and ran for 2 years. At this time the position would be added to the operating budget but will not show as an additional FTE as it is a transfer from grant to operating budget.
- Math Teacher/Numeracy Coach (TMS/THS)
 - The state has identified a need after the pandemic for math and math support. There is a need to create a bridge from TMS to THS and also provide numeracy training to train students and teachers.
 - The position will allow the district to continue its work with Pathways as well. Next year there will be a Business Pathway and an Engineering Pathway (STEAM).

Dr. Willett noted that without the additional staff, the budget increase is over 4% and the positions are important for the district in a variety of ways.

Dr. Willett noted that staff are very hardworking, and the contracts provide fair compensation levels. The district's per pupil expenditure is still one of the lowest in the state and is in the fourth quartile. Additionally, the 5-year budget average is approximately .74% and the 9-year budget average is about 1.5%. Given that a maintenance budget is 2.5-3.0%, they have maximized resources and received good value. Dr. Willett noted that the budget maintains reasonable class sizes and makes the appropriate adjustments for enrollments.

Dr. Willett explained that there has been a spike in grants and reviewed the information. Part of the increase is due to grants the district has sought as part of partnerships but most profoundly it is due to the ESSER grants and ARP funds which are not typical grant situations. For example, state grants for FY22/23 are listed as \$171K versus FY21/22 at \$761K which had a lot to do with the ESSERs and when and when they are incurred. The grants fund positions and when the time comes the funding ends, retirements will hopefully allow the district to absorb the positions into the operating budget.

Ms. Lundgren explained that she thought that social studies teacher and the school counselor were 2 positions. Dr. Willett explained that the school counselor at TMS is a person who also taught some classes in addition to counseling and had a social studies certification. The person hired for the position at THS in this budget will cover the sections that will be created for USBLH. The counselor position at TMS, which also covers Skills for Adolescents, was formerly being paid for via a grant, and will now be in the operating budget.

Ms. Lundgren noted that the budget book shows that FTE is down 3.1 but they are adding positions. She does not see the .6 listed under districtwide personnel; the book shows .4. Dr. Willett explained this is based on the working arrangements they know about for next year for a current employee. The add will be .6. He will articulate this in a narrative in the Q&A document. Although they are adding positions, the overall FTE in the operating budget decreases, and some positions are transitioning from the operating budget into grants.

Mr. Marie asked if Dr. Willett has an idea of what the enrollment may be for USBLH. Dr. Willett responded that it will be in the course catalog and there has been a lot of interest but the registration process for classes has not yet occurred. He projects there will be 2-3 sections. If they do not add the position, they would have to reduce other offerings because there are only so many teachers for the sections offered.

Mr. Marie commented that they spoke about a grant program for personal finance and asked if anything for this is included. Dr. Willett explained that he originally considered including the position, but the state may come out with a mandate in a year or two and offer more grants. Because it is not mandated but USBLH is, he included the latter in this budget. He is still working on finding a grant that would fund the personal finance position.

Mr. Marie commented that the FFC should discuss other ways of funding 1:1 Technology. He is concerned about it being in the operating budget. He noted that overall, he does not know if the budget will pass at referendum at almost 5% and will review the information further. He understands much of it is contractual.

Ms. Griffin asked if Dr. Willett has an exact dollar amount for 1:1 Technology. She believes they will need to look at other options for funding some of it. Dr. Willett responded that it is in the range of \$206K. He included this in the operating budget because the plan included the renewal cycle and part of the plan was to have it in the operating budget, but the FFC would be a good place to continue to review it. Dr. Willett noted that the ERF allows for technology. While it could be used for this year, in perpetuity it may not be an effective method.

Ms. Griffin noted that she has been a big proponent for some changes to the math program at THS and asked for more details about the math position. Dr. Willett explained this would be a certified teacher who would teach classes and help with the math curriculum they have been working on to provide more support and options particularly at THS. He would like 75% of the position's time to be teaching and would train the person so that 25% could be work as a numeracy coach. Currently they contract out when onboarding new staff and doing refresher training. Training someone as a numeracy coach would allow it to be done in district and providing cost avoidance opportunities. Ms. Griffin asked if this position would work on curriculum at THS as well. Dr. Willett explained that the position's focus is on the bridge between TMS and THS. They have spent a lot of time working on bridges. Math at THS has been a major area of focus for the Math Supervisor and this will continue next year.

Ms. Griffin asked about the new social studies teacher at THS. She asked if they have considered combining USBLH with the current Native American social studies elective since the latter already exists. It would alleviate having an additional position but allow all of the social studies options to remain. Dr. Willett responded that while from a human resource standpoint this makes sense, however they are two different classes in terms of content and curriculum. The USBLH curriculum is a very involved, and in Tolland the Native American class was developed as a full course. Ms. Griffin commented that they will review the numbers more in depth in FFC and she has some concerns right now about a 4.94% increase. She noted that it may be difficult with a lot going on right now with inflation and the cost of goods and services. They may need to be creative with other options to get everything the students need.

Ms. Lundgren asked about furniture and fixtures in appendix F listed as increasing 194%. She believes FFC had discussed having this as a capital expense rather than in the operating budget. Dr. Willett explained that the ERF provides an opportunity for use but when used, generally the next year it appears to be a higher increase. It happens over a span of many years and can be difficult to climb back from such a position. He noted that the furniture in some of the schools is in need of replacement.

Ms. Lundgren asked what comprises line 564, Tuition Education Agency within State. Dr. Willett explained that lines 560, 561, and 564 are a combination of special education items, services, and tuition. He will provide a run down in the Q&A.

Ms. Lundgren asked which Pathways are supported in the budget. Dr. Willett responded that Business and Engineering are both supported.

Mr. Regisford asked about the social and emotional welfare aspect. Last night the Mental Health and Substance Use Advisory Task Force submitted its report. He asked if the information used was staff or state-guided and if moving forward the recommendations of the task force can be addressed within the budget. Dr. Willett explained that he can post a narrative about social emotional learning (SEL). For a few years there has been an increasing need for social emotional support and counseling assistance in schools. The pandemic magnified these needs and links for online resources in the budget document show some of the research. The school counselor position was brought in via a grant and is even more needed now. What the task force is doing is all part of an effort both in the school and the community to help, and is reflected in the budget. Dr. Willett meets quarterly with the counselors and school psychologist, and they continually speak to the need and are overwhelmed. It is one of the most important and widely known needs. Mr. Regisford confirmed that social and emotional well-being of students is one of the big parts of the budget.

H.3 Coronavirus Efforts – District Plan Review & Update
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-75IRyZQngjyPmZpjAohsJEpNadHj6--ggyt0fi8_4/edit?usp=sharing

Dr. Willett noted that each school's webpage has a banner highlighting the Tolland Public Schools Pandemic Continuity of Learning Program (PCLP) that links to resources

and the plan. Federal and state requirements stipulate that schools have a Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan. The document articulates what the district is doing and provides additional information. One of the provisions is that it is presented publicly about every 6 months. It was scheduled to be presented at the December meeting, but because it was cancelled, it is being presented this evening. The document will be reviewed again in: June 2022, December 2022, and June 2023.

Dr. Willett highlighted new aspects/updates of the plan due to changes in guidance from the state, the DPH, and the CIAC. These can be found in Appendix documents. One of changes is regarding the quarantine period for students who are in-school close contacts and out-of-school close contacts. Another is regarding the CIAC rules where everyone masks all the time. Unvaccinated close contacts are off the sport for 10 days and those who are vaccinated and asymptomatic may continue to play. Those who are vaccinated and symptomatic are off the sport for 5 days. Testing can impact outcomes. Dr. Willett noted that when a student is subjected to a quarantine due to out-of-school close contact it is now for 5 days rather than 10. Dr. Willett noted that for in-school close contact, the school was no longer required to do contact tracing as of December 31st and is not doing so. Reporting however is still required and those who are vaccinated and symptomatic are placed in a mandatory quarantine. The energy that was spent doing contact tracing is now focused on maintaining staff levels. The district picked up masks and testing kits from the state and are being used as specified by the state. Additional tests were acquired and used when needed for staff for workforce maintenance.

Dr. Willett reviewed the new reporting. Information is available regarding COVID identifications via a link on the PCLP webpage and the Superintendent's Bulletin. The identifications reflect those both in-school and out-of-school per grade.

Mr. Marie confirmed that the Board does not need to vote on renewing the plan. He would like to discuss issues and/or plans for such items as the prom and graduation early in the semester. Dr. Willett noted that he believes spring will look very different than it did last year.

Ms. Griffin asked who does the contact tracing for an out-of-school close contact. Dr. Willett explained that this could be through the parent/guardian reaching out to the school. Ms. Griffin asked if the school nurses are contact tracing within the class and their involvement for a student with an out-of-school close contact. Dr. Willett explained that the nurses have to act when informed either from the parent/guardian or the EHHD and reach out and enforce close contact and COVID positive quarantine periods. Contact tracing, which is no longer done by the school, was much more extensive and included actively interviewing to get lists of people and reaching out to them.

Ms. Gallichant asked why students in grades K-8 still have assigned seats at lunch if contact tracing is not being done. Dr. Willett explained that they are still responsible for making reasonable mitigations such as masks and creating reasonable spacing. Mitigating strategies still need to be in place and the district may be asked to defend them. Lunch is identified as one of the most vulnerable places since students need to

remove their masks to eat; there is an expectation for mitigation. He believes this may be addressed differently in March. Ms. Gallichant commented that she understands the need for physical safety but in terms of social emotional health, lunch is one of the only times students have to socialize during the day. She suggested perhaps a quicker rotation of assigned seating could be done.

Ms. Plourd agreed with Ms. Gallichant about the lunches. She added that some students could be having lunch with those in their inner circle much like they do with their families. She noted that at last night's Council meeting it was stated that school transmission is less than 5% and this has a lot to do with the mitigating factors but at the same time they need to move toward an endemic. Ms. Plourd noted that contact tracing has stopped and when looking at the decision tree, making a report of COVID is contact tracing and the district is overstepping its bounds. It is time to move forward and not discriminate based on vaccine status. Students need to be in school and it is unacceptable that a student who is healthy and tests negative is not in school.

Ms. Shaikh asked if the number of identifications include teachers and if they are being tracked. Dr. Willett responded that they are not included in the number of identifications but are being tracked. All identifications are reported to the state. Ms. Shaikh asked if there is a greater uptick in positivity rates in teachers versus students. Dr. Willett responded that the positivity rate in teachers mirrors the general population. He noted that anyone who is symptomatic is treated as a potential positive so from a workforce standpoint that is an issue.

I. COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

- Communications – Ms. Gallichant provided an update of the December 9th meeting. Discussions included cross sharing of information between the Board and PTOs. A summary of the meeting as well as the minutes are available.
- Mental Health and Substance Use Advisory Task Force– Mr. Marie provided an update. Discussions included creating a teen center, modification of programs to increase participation, and creating a survey for students to learn what activities may interest them.
- Curriculum – will meet tomorrow
- Birch Grove Building Committee – Ms. Philbin provided an update. Ms. Murray is now the Town Council liaison, and the project will not be closed out until spring at minimum.
- Finance and Facilities – will meet next week

J. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Ms. Lundgren encouraged everyone to ask questions about the budget and highlighted the links available to submit questions. Next week they will have an opportunity to ask questions at the workshop. Dr. Willett noted that there will be a welcome overview and breakout sessions. Ms. Lundgren added that even if someone does not have a question, listening to others may spark questions.

K. BOARD ACTION

K.1 Coronavirus Relief Fund

Dr. Willett reviewed attachment K.1 and provided background information.

The Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) was put in place at the outset of the pandemic. The idea was that given the circumstances the Board may not have been able to use all of its funds. Due to it being limited by the statutory year and some limitations to the ERF, the CRF was made available so funds could be transferred to it and used over a span of years to assist the district in addressing the needs created by the pandemic. The Board requested that the CRF be continued and noted that the funds would be used for associate educators (AEs) who support quarantined students and for the extended school year (ESY) program for general education students.

Some Council members suggested adding the following provision, "Any remaining funds at year-end shall be used for COVID related expenses incurred out of the General Fund budget" (item E) and that the Board replenish the CRF with end of year funds. At the end of FY2023, end of year funds would have to go into the CRF before the ERF.

Dr. Willett reviewed 3 possible actions:

- Motion to authorize the superintendent to communicate to the Town Council that the Board of Education has no objection to the new language "E" being added to the Coronavirus Relief Fund language.
- Motion to authorize the superintendent to communicate to the Town Council that the Board of Education endorses the renewal of the Coronavirus Relief Fund in its original form prior to and excluding the addition of E.
- Motion to authorize the superintendent to request that, given funds were made available due to services that were not provided to TPS children in special education, transportation, staff, and energy/building use during the pandemic in 2020-2021, resulting in end of year funds rolled-over to the General Fund; that those funds, up to \$273,090, be provided as a supplemental appropriation to the Board of Education out of the Town General Fund to provide students additional pandemic support for fiscal year 2022-2023 in the form of an Extended School Year(summer) program July 5 to August 5, 2022 open to all general education students.

Ms. Griffin commented that she is agreeable to the wording of item E if the agreement can be renewed for 2 years. She would like to plan on \$117K for the current year and putting aside \$273K for FY23 so it is available if needed. She asked if a 2-year renewal was discussed. Dr. Willett responded that he did not get the impression that the Council would have resistance to a 2-year renewal. In order to use the CRF for the 2023 ESY, it would need to be a 2-year duration. He noted that the CRF is a convention of language. The Council may do what it wants with end of year funds. A supplemental appropriation outside of the CRF is also an option.

Ms. Plourd expressed concern that the 2-year request may not be the most responsible way to move forward. The CRF was established as an emergency fund and as they move toward a more endemic state, she does not believe they need a fund to provide relief. She is in agreement with item E but would vote on 1 year vs. 2.

Ms. Lundgren asked if they go forward with item E, the Board needs to know that funds are available for AEs who are working this year. Dr. Willett explained that they are seeking funding for the AEs and the ESY. If the CRF cannot be extended beyond this year, the funds cannot be used for ESY which is one of the greatest COVID related needs. The district would not have the flexibility to offer ESY without the town's

cooperation. Ms. Lundgren noted that the goal is to have \$273K available to fund the ESY and AEs. Dr. Willett noted that toward the end of the year they will need to see how to make the \$273K available, but it needs to be expended in the next fiscal year, and it may mean a freeze at that time. He noted that the CRF is a convention of language, and the situation could be handled by a supplemental appropriation. This is General Fund money. If continuation of the CRF into perpetuity is a concern for some, another way to handle it is to communicate to the Council that there were savings during a FY because of services students could not have rendered to them and ask for a supplemental appropriation to specifically serve the same general population students with the ESY.

Ms. Shaikh asked if Dr. Willett had an opportunity to tell the Council about the need for the ESY and the possible uncertainty of how it would be funded. Dr. Willett explained that the need was articulated in the CRF one-pager at the joint meeting. Subsequent to that item E was presented. Ms. Shaikh explained that the ESY needs to be initiated and funded. She recommended relaying this to the Council and asking how they would like to see if funded. Dr. Willett noted that another option is to ask that a provision be added to the ERF language to address use of this kind. Ms. Shaikh was in favor of this idea since as the years go on, hopefully fewer students will need the ESY. Dr. Willett noted that the ERF was provided by the state to allow towns to give boards of education the ability to carry over funds. If the ERF provision is expanded to ESY program utilization, another option would be available to support students socially/emotionally over the summer.

Mr. Marie commented that he is fine with item E but would like the CRF to be in place for 2 years. His concern about amending the ERF would be that it is an ordinance. While he sees that they need get used to the virus being endemic, the learning loss will last several years. Dr. Willett noted that during the budget process the Board may turn to the ERF for a series of items to stabilize the budget condition and they may not be able to re-fund the ERF as effectively if the money has to be used to fund something else. If the Board wants to use the ERF as a stabilizing tool, it may want to use caution with what it pledges to do with end of year funds. He noted the supplemental appropriation request as an option.

Ms. Lundgren explained that they will look for a supplemental appropriation whether or not there is a CRF so they can have the ESY and AEs.

Ms. Griffin commented that the CRF has already been sort of agreed upon and would like it to continue with the stipulation. Otherwise, the Board will need to build ESY into the FY23 budget. If ESY is necessary, then the CRF is the first place to get it approved.

Ms. Philbin commented that ESY needs to be highlighted in the Board's conversations with the Council. It would be paramount to continue to have the fund for items such as ESY and social/emotional health services. As they come out of this, how many additional years of assistance will be needed for students – 1 year, 5 years, entire educational career through high school? She does not believe ESY will only be needed this summer or next. Social emotional health is paramount so students can continue to absorb lessons. The ESY program was a huge success for Tolland. She asked Dr. Willett

if he has any information about some of the ramifications of what has been going on educationally, socially, and emotionally that ESY and counseling services would need to address. Dr. Willett explained that ESY will be important for the general education population this summer and believes many will avail themselves of it this year. As the Superintendent, he would be concerned if language would tether the Board to a course of action a year or more out. For example, if in signifying some agreement to E the Board has pledged future end of year funds to a fund that may not have a strictly pandemic use in FY24, it could be in lieu of the ERF. Further, item E potentially tethers a future Board to a course of action and there may be question of the authority of a Board to do this. They do not know what the needs at the end of FY23 or FY24 will look like, so it is hard to make a that kind of commitment. At this point it is a “strings attached” situation and a supplemental appropriation may be the best way to address this.

Ms. Plourd noted that the Council had a public hearing on December 28th for the CRF. She asked if another public hearing would be needed. Dr. Willett responded that the Council delayed the public hearing because the Board did not yet have an opportunity to discuss this as of that date. They are expecting the Board’s feedback, but the Board is not bound to do anything this evening. The Council explained that they were acting on it because the Board expressed urgency, the Board’s urgency was related to the CRF expiration date, prior to December 28. Ms. Plourd noted that she would be happy to make the first motion.

Mr. Holt commented that he supports voting on one of the options this evening. The Board came forward with a sense of urgency and the Council responded. He likes the third option because it is the cleanest and believes the Council will look favorably on what the Board want to spend the money on and how.

Ms. Lundgren agreed with Mr. Holt. She is fine with keeping the CRF as long as the funds can be used for ESY and the AEs.

Mr. Regisford asked for clarity on the 3 options. Ms. Lundgren explained that the first option is adding item E. Whatever end of year funds are left would first be used to replenish the CRF before funding the ERF. The second option leaves it as is and does not include adding item E. The third option is to note that the Board will request the funds via a supplemental appropriation - \$273K to fund the ESY for summer 2022. Dr. Willett clarified that the CRF technically does not currently exist, and the Board would be asking the Council to recommit to it.

Ms. Gallichant asked if the CRF needs to be renewed for any of the options. She either wants to leave it as is and have the AEs and ESY funded or ask for them to be funded. She expressed concern that if they do not include the language that the Council would respond in the negative and then the Board would not have anything. Dr. Willett explained that the CRF technically expired in the summer of 2021. The possible options to request are to continue the CRF with its original language where end of year funds may be used without the added condition, to accept the condition item E, or to forego the CRF and request a supplemental appropriation for ESY. Dr. Willett noted that the Board does not have the authority to do something with the funds independently because it is General Fund money. The request could be for a supplemental

appropriation instead. Ms. Gallichant believes the CRF should be continued as it has been in the past. The AEs and ESY are needed by the students. The change in language puts a different level of control on what students need.

Ms. Plourd called a point of order that item K is Board action, and it is expected that the Board will take action. Three potential motions have been presented. They can make a motion and discuss it.

Ms. Plourd motioned to authorize the superintendent to communicate to the Town Council Chair that the Board of Education has no objection to the new language "E" being added to the Coronavirus Relief Fund language.

Mr. Holt seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken.

Aye: Plourd,

Nay: Marie, Griffin, Gallichant, Regisford, Holt, Philbin, Shaikh, Lundgren

Motion failed.

Mr. Marie motioned to authorize the superintendent to communicate to the Town Council Chair that the Board of Education has no objection to the new language "E" being added to the Coronavirus Relief Fund language provided that the Council agree to continue the Coronavirus Relief Fund for 2 fiscal years.

Mr. Holt seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken.

Aye: Marie, Plourd, Griffin, Holt,

Nay: Gallichant, Regisford, Philbin, Shaikh, Lundgren

Motion fails.

Mr. Marie motioned to authorize the superintendent to communicate to the Town Council Chair that the Board of Education endorses the renewal of the Coronavirus Relief Fund in its original form prior to and excluding the addition of E.

Mr. Regisford seconded the motion.

Discussion: Ms. Griffin clarified that if approved as-is, because ESY is in the next fiscal year they would need to do this again a year from now. They are not guaranteeing the \$273K. The \$273K would automatically go back to the town if not used in FY22. Dr. Willett commented that if it is going to continue as written, the Board and the Council would have a conversation in June/July/August/September to continue it to FY23 and the Board would likely be asking for the AE dollars at the end of this year. If a 2-year provision was added, the conversation in Jun/July/August/September would not be needed. Mr. Marie commented that he prefers this over option 3. He expressed concern that the Council may ask for other stipulations if the Board requests a supplemental appropriation. Further, the way the fund is written there is flexibility how the money is used so if in 2 years if there is something additional needed, they may be able to use the funds for it. Dr. Willett noted that if approved as it was and the funds are allocated, any money not used goes to the ERF up to 1%. Ms. Philbin confirmed that the Board could create a fourth option with the caveat of option 2 with the 2-year addendum.

A roll call vote was taken.

Aye:

Nay: Marie, Philbin, Griffin, Plourd, Gallichant, Regisford, Holt, Shaikh, Lundgren

Motion failed.

Mr. Marie motioned to authorize the superintendent to communicate to the Town Council Chair that the Board of Education endorses the renewal of the Coronavirus Relief Fund in its original form prior to and excluding the addition of E for a 2-year duration.

Ms. Gallichant seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken.

Aye: Marie, Philbin, Griffin, Gallichant, Regisford, Shaikh, Lundgren

Nay: Plourd, Holt,

Motion passed.

Mr. Marie motioned to extend the meeting past 10:00PM

Mr. Regisford seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken.

Aye: Griffin, Regisford, Gallichant, Shaikh, Philbin, Holt, Lundgren

Nay: Plourd

Motion passed.

L. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

M. POINTS OF INFORMATION

- Tolland Town Council – Special – December 2, 2021
- Tolland Town Council – Special – December 7, 2021
- Tolland Town Council – December 14, 2021
- Tolland Town Council – Special – December 15, 2021
- Tolland Town Council – December 28, 2021

- Ms. Gallichant thanked everyone for their patience as she tried to figure things out and asked questions.
- Mr. Regisford thanked everyone for their patience for the same.

N. FUTURE - none

O. NEW BUSINESS - none

P. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Marie motioned to adjourn at 10:00 PM.

Mr. Regisford seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Pascuzzi
Clerk

SUPERINTENDENT'S AGENDA ITEM BACKGROUND

ITEM: 2022-2023 School Calendar

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

FOR BOE MEETING: January 26, 2022

ITEM SUMMARY:

Please see the Tolland Public School 2022-2023 proposed calendar. The calendar provides the following advantages:

- Parent/Teacher conferences for grades K through 12
- A full day off November 23rd to provide families needed travel time
- A half day December 23rd is responsive to family needs and requests
- Adheres to the EASTCONN calendar as is the practice for schools in our region
- Fulfills contractual obligations
- Provides enough days to mitigate the potential impact of cancellations
- Faculty in-service day in February aligned with non-school days in the week so as to provide families a larger block of time in February
- A reasonable number of Early Release and full professional in-service days
- Early Release days that are more likely to retain student populations and continuity of instruction

FINANCIAL SUMMARY:

None

BOARD ATTORNEY REVIEW:

None

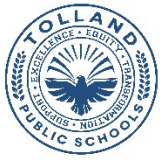
BOE ACTION DESIRED:

When ready:

- 1) Move to Action
- 2) Motion to accept the Tolland Public School 2022-2023 Calendar. Second. Discussion. Vote.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS ATTACHED:

2022-2023 School Calendar



TOLLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

District School Calendar

First Day: August 25, 2022
 Last Day of School: June 8, 2023
 182 Days

2022 – 2023
DRAFT – PENDING

August 2022 (5 school days)								February 2023 (17 school days)							
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S		S	M	T	W	TH	F	S	
	1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3	4	
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	5	6	7	8*	9	10	11	Prof. Development 8
Teacher In-Service 22-24	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Presidents Day 20
First Day of School 25	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	February Break 20-21
	28	29	30	31				26	27	28					In-Service 22
September 2022 (21 school days)								March 2023 (23 school days)							
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S		S	M	T	W	TH	F	S	
				1	2	3					1	2*	3*	4	Parent Conferences 2-3
Labor Day 5	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Prof. Development 14	11	12	13	14*	15	16	17	12	13	14	15*	16	17	18	Prof. Development 15
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
	25	26	27	28	29	30		26	27	28	29	30	31		
October 2022 (20 school days)								April 2023 (14 school days)							
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S		S	M	T	W	TH	F	S	
						1								1	
Prof. Development 5	2	3	4	5*	6	7	8	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Good Friday 7
Columbus Day 10	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Spring Break 10-14
Prof. Development 19	16	17	18	19*	20	21	22	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
	23/30	24/31	25	26	27	28	29	23/30	24	25	26*	27	28	29	Prof. Development 26
November 2022 (18 school days)								May 2023 (22 school days)							
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S		S	M	T	W	TH	F	S	
		1	2	3*	4	5			1	2	3	4	5	6	
Parent Conferences 3-4	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Prof. Development 16	13	14	15	16*	17	18	19	14	15	16	17*	18	19	20	Prof. Development 17
Thanksgiving Break 23-25	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
	27	28	29	30				28	29	30	31				Memorial Day 29
December 2022 (17 school days)								June 2023 (6 school days)							
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S		S	M	T	W	TH	F	S	
				1	2	3						1	2	3	
Prof. Development 7	4	5	6	7*	8	9	10	4	5	6	7	8*	9	10	Projected Last Day 8
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
Winter Break 26-30	18	19	20	21	22	23*	24	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
Christmas 25	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	25	26	27	28	29	30		
January 2023 (19 school days)								July 2023							
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S		S	M	T	W	TH	F	S	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							1	
New Year's Day 1	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
MLK Day 16	15	16	17	18*	19	20	21	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Prof. Development 18	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
In-Service (K-8) 27	29	30	31					23/30	24/31	25	26	27	28	29	
Mid-Semester Day 27															

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In-Service (NS) ■ Conferences ■ District Closed ■ Prof. Development (Early Release) 	<p>*Early Dismissal Day – All District</p> <p>THS Mid Semester Date- January 27, 2023 Grades 9-12 K-8 Teacher In-Service</p> <p>** Please note this is subject to change based on weather</p>	<p><u>Parent Teacher Conferences</u></p> <p>November 3 – Early Release K-12 November 4 – No school for students March 2 & 3 – Early Release K-12</p>
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The last day of school is scheduled for June 8, 2023. Please note, where possible, snow or emergency days will first be made up through June days. If, however, such snow or emergency days push the last day of school potentially into the last week of June, days may need to be taken from April or other vacations as needed. According to Connecticut General Statute 10-15 and 10-259 the school year must be at least 180 days and cannot extend past the last day of June. The school calendar is posted on the Tolland Public Schools website at <http://www.tolland.k12.ct.us>

* **Early Dismissal Days-** September 14, October 5, October 19, November 3, November 16, December 7, December 23, January 18, February 8, March 2, March 3, March 15, April 26, May 17, June 8

THS Mid Semester Date- January 27, 2023 ** Please note this is subject to change based on weather.

2022-2023 Term Dates

Quarter 1 - September – November, Quarter 2 - November – January, Quarter 3 - February – April, Quarter 4 - April - June

Trimester 1 - September – December, Trimester 2 - December – March, Trimester 3 - March - June

Semester 1 - September – January, Semester 2 - February - June

** Please note these are subject to change based on weather

SCHOOL HOURS

SCHOOL(S)	START	END
Tolland High School		
Regular School Day	7:15	1:43
2-Hour Delay	9:15	1:43
Early Dismissal/Exam Days	7:15	10:45
Tolland Middle School		
Regular School Day	8:00	2:30
2-Hour Delay	10:00	2:30
Early Dismissal	8:00	11:45
Tolland Intermediate School		
Regular School Day	8:45	3:15
2-Hour Delay	10:45	3:15
Early Dismissal	8:45	12:40
Birch Grove Primary School		
Regular School Day	9:00	3:30
2-Hour Delay	11:00	3:30
Early Dismissal	9:00	12:55

2022-2023 HOLIDAYS AND CULTURAL OBSERVANCES

TPS encourages all students and staff members to appreciate and be respectful of each other's heritage and cultural diversity. The following is a list of dates for secular holidays as well as other festivals and holy days observed in our community. Additional information regarding these and other celebrations is available on our website.

Labor Day	September 5, 2022
Rosh Hashanah	September 26, 2022
Yom Kippur	October 5, 2022
Columbus Day	October 10, 2022
Diwali	October 24, 2022
Veterans Day	November 11, 2022
Thanksgiving Day	November 24, 2022
Hanukkah begins	December 18, 2022
Christmas	December 25, 2022
Kwanzaa begins	December 26, 2022
New Year's Day	January 1, 2023
Three Kings Day	January 6, 2023
Martin Luther King Jr. Day	January 16, 2023
President's Day	February 20, 2023
Holi	March 8, 2023
Ramadan begins	March 22, 2023
Passover begins	April 5, 2023
Good Friday	April 7, 2023
Greek Orthodox Easter	April 16, 2023
Eid al Fitr	April 21, 2023
Memorial Day	May 29, 2023

■ indicates days on which schools are closed

OUR SCHOOLS

Tolland High School

Thomas Poland, Principal
 Kimberly Marinan, Assistant Principal
 One Eagle Hill
 Phone: 870-6818
 Fax: 870-6826
<http://www.ths.tolland.k12.ct.us/>

Tolland Intermediate School

Jim Dineen, Principal
 Jennifer Merritt, Assistant Principal
 96 Old Post Road
 Phone: 870-6885
 Fax: 872-7126
<http://www.tis.tolland.k12.ct.us/>

Tolland Public Schools

Walter Willett, Ph.D, Superintendent
 51 Tolland Green
 Phone: 870-6850
 Fax: 870-7737
<http://www.tolland.k12.ct.us/>

Tolland Middle School

Mary Grande, Principal
 Anthony Spangle, Assistant Principal
 One Falcon Way
 Phone: 870-6860
 Fax: 870-5737
<http://www.tms.tolland.k12.ct.us/>

Birch Grove Primary School

Tom Swanson, Principal
 Suzanne Guglietta, Assistant Principal
 247 Rhodes Road
 Phone: 870-6750
 Fax: 870-6754
<http://www.bgp.tolland.k12.ct.us/>

SUPERINTENDENT’S AGENDA ITEM BACKGROUND

ITEM: Legislative Breakfast (CABE) - **Virtual**

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

FOR BOE MEETING: January 26, 2022

ITEM SUMMARY:

Each year Ellington, Vernon, and Tolland school districts take turns hosting a Legislative Breakfast. State representatives, BOE members, and Town officials are invited. This year’s will occur on January 31, 2022, starting at 8:00 AM, and will be entirely virtual.

DISCUSSION TOPICS:

- 1. Minority Teacher Recruitment**
- 2. Remote Learning**
- 3. Public Health Policy**

Welcome & Introductions

*Dr. Joseph Macary, Superintendent, Vernon Public Schools
Dr. Scott Nicol, Superintendent Ellington Public Schools
Dr. Walter Willett, Superintendent, Tolland Public Schools
Patrice McCarthy, Deputy Director and General Council, CABE
Sheila McKay, Sr. Staff Associate for Government Relations CABE*

Discussion/Responses/Comments from Legislators

Legislators

Questions/Comments

Audience

Close/Acknowledgment

CABE

FINANCIAL SUMMARY:

None

BOARD ATTORNEY REVIEW:

None

BOE ACTION DESIRED:

None

SUPPORTING MATERIALS ATTACHED:

None

MINUTES

TOLLAND TOWN COUNCIL ZOOM ONLY MEETING January 11, 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; Bev Bellody, Director, Human Services; Maureen Flanagan, Assistant Director, Human Services; Mike Wilkinson, Director of Administrative Services; Dr. Walter Willett, Superintendent; Bruce Watt, Director, Recreation; Robert Miller, Easter Highlands Health District (EHHD)

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:03PM.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Recited
3. **MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Observed
4. **PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS:** none
5. **PUBLIC PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** *(on any subject within the jurisdiction of the Town Council) (2-minute limit)*

Renie Besaw, 230 Grant Hill Road, commented that she does not believe the Council should agree to allowing a study of the Birch Grove field grounds as an option for the proposed Miracle Field. It would be a wonderful addition to the town, but she does not believe the town should agree to having it on school property. While the proposal is that the field would be self-supporting, the turf field at THS was also presented that way and has never come close to being self-supporting. Once on town property, if the funding does not come through, what happens? Ms. Besaw thinks it is irresponsible for the Council to agree to allow the group to spend money on such a study if they are not committed to having it at Birch Grove. As a taxpayer she does not want to have another \$100K/year expense added for just 1 field. The Miracle Field group should pursue a private property for the field. This would not only add to the number of fields in town but also make it clear that the town is not financially responsible for it.

Dave Garritt, 23 Rudnansky Lane, president of the Tolland Soccer Club and Tolland resident commented that he is in favor of the proposed Miracle Baseball Field. He, like others, has contributed to many of the fundraisers held over the past few months and commended Mr. and Mrs. Leibowitz for their efforts and passion for the project. The field would be a great addition to Tolland; however, the key word is “addition” and not, as currently proposed, a replacement. Mr. Garritt explained that the Birch Grove location was originally requested in June because the location was already paved for the portables for the Birch Grove reconstruction and would make a perfect base for the proposed field saving construction costs of \$150K. Since then, the field was regraded, seeded, and is in the process of being returned to a grass field. He anticipates they will be able to play on the field in the fall. Thus, there is no financial advantage to using that site. Mr. Garritt explained that the Birch Grove field has historically been home to the Tolland Soccer Club’s preK-2 recreation soccer program. In the fall of 2021, there were over 230 children in the program including many underserved populations. On a typical Sunday morning they host over 500 people at the facility including players, coaches, and families. Replacing the grass field with the Miracle Baseball Field would severely limit the program. Additionally, the top soccer program, the equivalent of Miracle Baseball and a program specifically targeted for physically and mentally

handicapped children, would not use the Miracle Field because, as proposed, it would not be lighted, and the offering is in the fall with short days. The program is currently hosted on the turf field at THS and has been a fantastic fit with rave reviews. In summary, the Miracle Field needs to be additive to the community and not a replacement. Therefore, the resolution this evening should limit the proposed engineering study to locations such as Cross Farms, Crandall Park, and TMS with existing unused space and prohibit the study from investigating baseball, softball, football, cheerleading, tennis, basketball, pickleball, soccer, and tiddlywinks at the facilities.

Matt Rood, 27 Clifford Avenue, a member of the Tolland Soccer Club and a parent in the club commented that he is 100% in favor of the Miracle Field. He opposes the proposed current location because it would displace many of the young soccer players. The Miracle Field should be proposed in a different location within the town.

Tim Griffin, 80 Doe Run, President of Tolland Little League commented that Tolland Little League has opportunities for girls and boys practicing, playing in games, and developing as people. Specifically, they had 68 girls and 307 boys in the spring season ranging in age from 4 to 15 years old. In terms of the Miracle Field, the Tolland Little League Challenger Division would greatly benefit from the field. Last year, Tolland Little League had 16 challenger players – 5 of whom were from surrounding towns. The tee-ball division would likely use the field on a limited basis. Mr. Griffin explained that the proposed field at Birch Grove works well for them, but he understands where soccer is coming from since they would be in a similar situation if the proposed field was to be at Cross Farms or a highly utilized field they are currently using for their other divisions. If there is another location selected where Tolland Little League uses the field it will not work well for them. Mr. Griffin noted that the EHHD is listed on the Council's agenda this evening. He cautioned the Council to think through anything that may restrict youth sports in any way. The EHHD concluded in 2020 that an outdoor graduation would likely kill people. They want to get kids out enjoying sports in the spring and summer.

Jacob Marie, 32 Stuart Drive, commented that although he likes the concept of the Miracle Field, he has trouble supporting building this type of facility on school grounds. Given the large and frequent replacement costs of the facility, he is concerned if current fundraising schemes would be able cover the cost of the project and since it is on school property it would likely become the responsibility of the district and town later. They are already in a similar situation with the THS turf field which will be an expensive replacement cycle that they will have to worry about for years to come. Mr. Marie expressed concern about being in a similar situation again with the Miracle Field. He noted that adding such a field will make it more difficult to fund other capital projects that are vitally important like replacing school roofs. He suggested that the Council collaborate with the Miracle League to try to find a location on private property or another alternative.

Brenda Falusi, 4 Laurel Ridge Road, commented as a resident. She noted that EHHD is in attendance and applauded the Council for the opportunity to work in partnership with them to find ways to mitigate and address what is happening to the community with COVID-19. She is pleased the Council is having the experts in the field come in and people who can help the Council understand what is happening with the virus and how to mitigate the impact on the community. She added that she was a little disappointed with the types of questions that were asked and included in the agenda and hopes the Council listens to the experts. Ms. Falusi commented that the THS field is an asset to the community. Anything worth having is work upkeeping in the proper way. Hundreds of kids and families use the field, and it is great asset to the community. They need to stop using language that makes it seem like a hardship to the

community when it has so many benefits with organized sports, sporting events, and places where the community can come together. She would like to see people address the THS field as the asset and gem it is for the community. Hopefully they will see the same kinds of conversations about the Miracle Field.

Damien Berthiaume noted that he is speaking on behalf of Tolland Lacrosse. He commented that Tolland Lacrosse supports the construction of a Miracle Field but has some misgivings about the location at Birch Grove. Birch Grove is where they have historically had the Lightning Program (grades K-2) and the Bantam Program (3rd and 4th grade) which have practiced and played games there. The size and layout of the field allows for 2 or 3 fields for the small-sided games which is the way they play lacrosse in the age groups noted. It is a nice location for the youth players because it is also where they go to school, and they have some connection to the fields. Mr. Berthiaume explained that in his experience with his kids playing there, it becomes the focus of the community. They have had an opportunity while Birch Grove was reconstructed to see how lacrosse season works without Birch Grove and have had a shortage of fields. Last year there were times kindergarteners through 4th graders were sharing a field at THS with 7th & 8th graders while a junior varsity game was going on next door. He likes what Mr. Garritt said about Miracle Field being additive as opposed to replacing an existing field. While they support the Miracle Field, they would like to see an alternate location explored and leave the Birch Grove fields the way they are.

George Kotowicz, 42 Carter Drive, commented that he supports the Miracle Field. It is great to get special needs kids out and participating. The crux is to get special needs kids to participate and whether it is at Birch Grove or somewhere else it does not matter. Birch Grove is an ideal location.

Jeff Donofrio, 53 Susan Drive, commented that his daughter plays challenger baseball and he is part of the Miracle League Committee. He also serves on the Board for the 21st Century Tolland Fund whose mission is to promote sports for people with disabilities. When he thinks of the Miracle Field he thinks of community. Being a parent with a disabled child is challenging and difficult as well as isolating for both the children and parents. An endeavor like the Miracle Field fosters community both from Tolland as well as the surrounding towns. It brings together disabled kids and their families and friends. West Hartford is named as one of the best towns to live in in CT and one reason consistently cited is community - some publications specifically call out the Miracle Field as one of the reasons. Building a Miracle League Field in Tolland would add to the town and position the town as a desirable place to live. There are economic benefits for all residents as a result. Mr. Donofrio commented that putting the field at Birch Grove would enhance an already beautiful elementary school and enable it to be used by all kids both abled and disabled on a regular basis. As a member of the 21st Century Tolland Fund which supported Miracle Fields in both West Hartford and East Lyme, he noted that the plan is to donate \$25K to build Miracle League Field and they would like to partner with other initiatives if there is interest in a Kevin's Kourt. Mr. Donofrio commented that kids like his daughter have few options for sports. Being in a wheelchair makes it difficult to play on a normal field. His other 2 kids have many fields and courts to play on. In CT there are 2 Miracle League Fields and soon to be a third. He commented that whether he has appealed to their hearts, minds, or both it is a wonderful opportunity for Tolland to help the community.

6. **PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS:** none

7a. **REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES RESPONSIBLE TO THE COUNCIL:**

7.a.1. Report of the Mental Health and Substance Use Advisory Task Force. Proposal and recommendation from Tolland Mental Health and Substance Use Advisory Task Force.

Ms. Hancock noted that members of the task force are in attendance this evening and are prepared to present their first recommendation to the Council.

Becky Moore, Chair, provided information about her background and the structure of the task force. She introduced Vice Chair Madhu Renduchintala and Secretary Jacob Marie and noted that an open seat is available and encouraged anyone with interest to apply.

Ms. Moore explained that over the past year the task force has been assessing the needs of the Tolland community and has spoken to many stakeholders, listened to comments and feedback from the public, and looked at the structure of programming in neighboring towns. They also created a subcommittee to review data from the DMHAS's Region 4 Priority Report and to assess if an independent survey should be conducted. Based on the information gathered, the task force identified 2 areas of need: community education and engagement; need for expanded resources and services. These were reviewed by Ms. Moore.

Ms. Moore noted that they met with David O'Rourke from the Hockanum Valley Community Council (HVCC) in Vernon. HVCC created a partnership with Vernon and employs a community clinician that meets the assessed needs of the town. Given the needs identified, the task force believes Tolland would benefit from a similar partnership with the HVCC. Ms. Moore noted that the task force has identified roles and responsibilities for a wellness coordinator that would relate to the assessed needs previously noted. Ms. Moore reviewed the roles and responsibilities and noted that there is little overlap with Human Services.

Mr. Renduchintala noted that what was presented this evening is not the task force's final recommendation nor will it be dissolving after this evening. Ms. Moore noted that the task force is working on additional recommendations to present to the Council as well.

Ms. Nuccio asked about doing a survey to review the needs of Tolland specifically. Ms. Moore responded that her understanding after speaking with Mr. O'Rourke is that part of the role of the collaboration with HVCC is a needs assessment of Tolland residents. Mr. Marie commented that they have looked at additional data as well and will be looking at a survey conducted by Tolland Public Schools. The subcommittee will draft a final report with conclusions in February. He added that if a survey is done, it should be contracted out to ensure valid data/results. Ms. Nuccio commented that if a survey is done, they need to be confident that it reaches people in the community and gathers responses from the greatest number of residents possible, so it is a true gauge. She noted that this would be a good item to come before the ARPA subcommittee for review and added that a lot is going on at the state level that may be able to be leveraged. Ms. Nuccio asked about the role of a prevention wellness coordinator. Ms. Moore responded that a coordinator works within the community utilizing a variety of methods for engagement, coordinates efforts to improve the overall mental health of the community, and aims to be proactive. Ms. Nuccio commented that she likes the idea of contracting this out to get a gauge of the community's needs and sees it as additive to Ms. Flanagan's role. Ms. Moore confirmed that it is meant to supplement the work of human services. Ms. Nuccio asked if Ms. Moore has a quote from the HVCC for the cost and the structure going forward. Ms. Moore responded that she does not. The mandate of the task force was to assess the needs and present them to the Council and they did not get to the point of getting the information. Ms. Nuccio requested that Ms. Moore provide the contact information to the Council.

Mr. Reagan noted that he is part of the task force and met with Mr. O'Rourke prior to his presentation. Mr. O'Rourke explained that a needs assessment would be needed because they may not know what they do not know and it would be a contracted amount. Over 50 Tolland residents are currently engaged with the services of the HVCC which indicates there is a need.

Mr. Jones asked if other communities contract out such a service so they can see how it is working for them. Ms. Moore responded that another community contracts out with another agency but surrounding towns similar to Tolland have a more robust staff so there is less of a need to contract out. Mr. Jones commented that he believes this is a feasible application for the ARPA funds and a valuable position to explore. Ms. Moore commented given the number of people she has seen seeking services, an astronomical number of individuals have been impacted by COVID. She added that the recommendation was made with the senior population in mind as well.

Ms. Murray commented that she has been following the task force since its inception and a number of members of the community have been engaged. The recommendation presented is impressive and she thanked the task force.

Ms. Yudichak noted that she too is a member of the task force. She asked about the process. Ms. Moore responded that the next step is for the Council to decide if it wants to move forward with the recommendation. If it does, someone should contact Mr. O'Rourke to get more information. Further, the ARPA subcommittee should review the recommendation and decide if this would be an appropriate use of the funds. The task force is focusing on the assessment and recommendation as opposed to the operational aspect. Mr. Jones recommended that it be referred to the ARPA subcommittee for study and review. He asked that Mr. Reagan and Ms. Moore provide the contact information to the Interim Town Manager. Ms. Hancock noted that she can follow through on getting the information and bringing it to the ARPA subcommittee. Mr. Jones noted that if the ARPA subcommittee determines it to be an appropriate use of funds then it would be presented to the Council to authorize the expenditure. Ms. Yudichak asked if once the assessment is done if they would then look at the cost for a wellness coordinator. Ms. Nuccio explained that they will speak with Mr. O'Rourke, receive a quote, and discuss it in the ARPA subcommittee. If the ARPA subcommittee presents it to the Council, then the Council would decide on going forward with the contract with the HVCC.

Mr. Khan thanked the task force for all its work.

Mr. Luba motioned to move this issue to the ARPA subcommittee for further action regarding obtaining a quote for services.

Ms. Nuccio seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Jones commented that this is an appropriate endorsement to move this issue forward in the next step of the process.

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

7b. REPORTS OF TOWN COUNCIL LIAISONS

- ARPA Subcommittee – next meeting January 27th at 4:15PM.
- Commission on People with Disabilities – next meeting January 20th
- Board of Education – next meeting January 12th

- Mental Health and Substance Use Advisory Task Force – Ms. Yudichak provided an update of the January 3rd meeting.
- Recreation Advisory Board – Ms. Yudichak provided an update of the January 10th meeting.
- Agriculture Commission – Ms. Murray provided an update.
- Birch Grove Building Committee – Ms. Murray provided an update.
- Planning & Zoning Commission – Mr. Luba provided an update.
- Tolland Public Library Foundation – Mr. Jones provided an update of last night’s meeting.
- Conservation Commission – next meeting Thursday
- Tolland Water Commission – next meeting Wednesday

8. NEW BUSINESS (ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS):

8.1 Update from Robert L. Miller, M.P.H., R.S., Director of Health, Eastern Highlands Health District
Mr. Miller provided an overview of the EHHD and its activities.

Mr. Miller reviewed data including the following:

- Week ending January 1st over prior 2-week period – total case count in Tolland was 162
 - First week: 52 cases
 - Subsequent week: 110 cases
- Districtwide for the 1st week: 278 cases; 2nd week 600 cases
- Incidence Rate (DPH)
 - Tolland 1st week: 45 cases/100K
 - Tolland 2nd week: 79 cases/100K
 - State of CT Town Response Framework categorizes “red” after 15 cases/100K
- Positivity Percentages
 - Tolland 1st week: 9.1% (percentages of persons who tested positive)
 - Tolland 2nd week: 14.4%
 - Tolland’s rate is lower than the statewide rate
- CDC’s rate calculation
 - Tolland County 1,019 cases/100K
 - High risk: 100 cases/100K
 - Calculated on a 7-day average
- Vaccination rates
 - EHHD is continuing weekly clinics (adult and pediatric); 2 were at held at THS (November and December)
 - Fully vaccinated, Tolland, 75% (EHHD 73%, state 70%)
- Contact tracing - ongoing
- Isolation Quarantine – CDC updated guidance is 5 days with 5 additional days of strict adherence to masking; state health department has updated its guidance to align it with that of the CDC
- Testing
 - State is implementing an initiative to get self-tests to the public through municipalities
 - EHHD working with state to expand diagnostic testing services in the region
- EHHD issues a public statement (January 5th) requesting that businesses and residents take steps to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission

Mr. Miller reviewed the previously submitted questions and answers. He noted that he reached out to Dr. Lynn Sosa, Deputy State Epidemiologist at DPH for some of the data.

Ms. Yudichak asked about the accuracy of home tests. Mr. Miller responded that the gold standard is the PCR test. Home tests, dependent on brand, are 80%-95% effective in detecting a positive result if instructions are followed properly. The key terminology one should look for on the label is EUA (Emergency Use Authorization by the FDA). Ms. Yudichak expressed concern about the number of healthcare workers due to them becoming sick. Mr. Miller responded that he read that the state is calling up National Guardsmen to assist at some hospitals. Ms. Yudichak commented COVID is running rampant through THS and that ½ of the school is out. Dr. Willett responded that COVID identifications are published on the site so people can see them by grade. While THS is impacted, it is not any more pervasive there than elsewhere in the district. Ms. Yudichak asked if there is a backup plan if staff is affected. Dr. Willett explained that they expected to have to adjust and are doing so. The mitigations and processes have been ongoing for 2 years and they will keep students in school for in-person learning. It has required some sacrifices and adjustments, but the staff is dedicated and a great group.

Ms. Nuccio commented that Mr. Miller stated that recent guidance changed because less than 5% of kids are contracting the virus at school and asked about this. She also requested more information about guidance for school isolation and sports. Mr. Miller responded that the 5% is from non-DPH studies and can get the citations to Ms. Nuccio. He noted that today the DPH and yesterday the CIAC issued updated winter sports guidance. It recommends 5 days of isolation for positive cases and then 5 days of strict adherence to masking. For close contact, 5 days of quarantine and then 5 days of strict adherence to masking. He noted the quarantine pieces does not apply to those who are fully vaccinated. Mr. Miller noted that in the youth sports guidance a condition of going back to the sport is the ability to wear a mask while doing the sport; otherwise, the recommendation is that they not engage in the sport for the full 10 days. Vaccinated students must mask the entire 10 days while engaged in the sport. Mr. Miller confirmed that state health department and the department of education recommend that schools no longer do contact tracing. Ms. Nuccio confirmed that COVID does not live and thrive on surfaces. Mr. Miller noted that this does not lessen the importance of routine cleaning and disinfection. Ms. Nuccio confirmed that COVID is a droplet-based virus. It does not exist 12 hours later in a room if someone walked through who was infected. Mr. Miller noted this is still the mainstream guidance from the CDC and the scientific community. Ms. Nuccio asked when looking forward, as transmission goes down, given a high vaccination rate in Tolland, when can the public see some semblance of not masking in town hall and other areas. Mr. Miller responded that the primary measure being used is the CDC's measure of transmission risk in the county. The threshold is under 50 cases/100K but other factors could be considered. Ms. Nuccio asked for a conversion for the case count for a town the size of Tolland with a population of 15K. Mr. Miller responded that it is an incidence rate calculated by the number of cases divided by the time period that the rate is covering. In CT, it is a 14-day period. This is then divided by the population of the community and multiplied by 100K.

Mr. Luba noted that they encourage people to get vaccinated if they can and mask if they feel it is necessary. He noted that a recurring response to the questions posed was that they are not tracking the data. In talking with others, everyone is asking the same questions about the numbers, but they are not being tracked. If the experts cannot provide the information, it makes it difficult to come up with cohesive policies. His main concern is recurring conflation between the positivity rate and deaths, hospitalization, and other numbers. The more people that test, the greater the likelihood for testing positive but this does not mean more people are being hospitalized. He noted that the director of the CDC brought up the issue of if hospitalizations are because of COVID or with

COVID. Mr. Miller noted that Dr. Sosa acknowledged that the hospitalized COVID case numbers are not only those due to COVID but also with COVID. Mr. Luba asked about the hospitalization number and how many of those are patients who go to the ER use it as a PCP. They are admitted in the ER and then released. Mr. Miller responded that this data is not tracked but would provide insight to the nature, characteristics, and severity of specific variants. Mr. Luba explained that they are hearing about a large number of positive results and that hospitals are being overwhelmed but when speaking to people in hospitals they explain that people are using the ER to be tested when they have flu-like symptoms. They are admitted and released so to say hospitals are being overwhelmed may be misleading. Mr. Luba commented that in the EHHD, 131 people have been hospitalized over 2 years testing positive for COVID. Mr. Miller responded that they are questioning the accuracy of this number because the system used is reliant on providers reporting the information to the state health department. The information is often not reported at the level of detail for the information in the system to be accurate. He noted that this is not limited to COVID. Mr. Luba commented that the only verifiable numbers are the number of people who test positive and number of hospitalizations but the quality and character of the number of hospitalizations is unknown. Mr. Miller responded that that while the instinct is to look at the numbers empirically, it is important to see them as indications of risk in the community.

Mr. Khan asked why masks were not made mandatory for small businesses when it is mandatory in town hall and they are the same people visiting gas stations and liquor stores. Mr. Miller responded that it would be easier for the public if there were uniform policies across broader regions. The Governor's executive order provides authority to municipalities to create mask mandates within their jurisdiction. The EHHD has recommended that all persons wear a mask indoor in public settings regardless of their vaccination status. The executive order also allows for business owners to create a policy in their business environment. Mr. Khan commented that if one has a policy and another does not, an argument is created and causes fighting. If there is a policy, then everyone would follow it.

Ms. Murray commented that testing is difficult to get right now and asked Mr. Miller for guidance if someone needs to be tested and the next available appointment is 12 days out. Mr. Miller responded that the site www.ehhd.org has a list of testing resources in the region. He recommended remaining vigilant and diligent in efforts to find an appointment or visit a state site. He recommended arriving at least an hour before a state testing site is scheduled to open. Mr. Miller noted that one may be able to find a test kit at pharmacies as well and recommended stopping in to check.

Ms. Nuccio noted that at the site <https://www.211ct.org/> is another resource for finding testing sites. Mr. Miller noted this is on the EHHD site as well.

Ms. Yudichak asked what Mr. Miller would say to people who think masks do not work. Mr. Miller responded that the science shows that masks that are tight fitting and worn properly are effective in source protection. Masks are primarily to protect those around the wearer. Asymptomatic transmission spread is a challenge and one reason why it is so hard to prevent spread in the community.

Ms. Murray motioned to move item 9.1 up to precede item 8.2.

Mr. Luba seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

- 8.2 Consideration of a resolution for Town Council to conduct remote public meetings until further notice. This process will be reviewed at the second Town Council meeting in February 2022.

Ms. Hancock explained that with the increase in COVID and a number of cases in town hall, she is trying to keep people as safe as possible and out of the building as much as possible. Her concern is that she has been running on a bare bones staff recently due to the COVID impact. Given the number of people at tonight's meeting, she does not believe it would have been a good situation regarding controlling the spread of COVID if people were in Council Chambers. She requested that the Council consider going fully remote and that the topic be revisited in the second meeting in February.

Ms. Nuccio commented that she has an issue with this and in the Implementer Bill there is a law that has passed. If they go fully remote, they must comply with the law that says a computer has to be provided along with a staff person to monitor the user, and space be provided in town hall for meeting participation. She is not in favor of switching to remote. Under the hybrid model, anyone can stay home if they wish to do so. It is the Council's prerogative to do some meetings remotely but if they change the meeting format, they need to be prepared to meet the letter of the law and she does not believe they can. This was previously discussed with the town attorney and prior Council. Ms. Nuccio respects that people are worried about transmission but believes they can maintain the hybrid model with staff participating remotely. She is concerned that the town is not prepared to meet the legal requirements if the Council goes fully remote. While other commissions have done it, they do not have as many people attending meetings.

Ms. Murray asked if town staff needs to be in the building for the hybrid model. Ms. Hancock explained that someone would need to set up the Owl camera and run the Zoom program. Her concern is having too many people in the building and she does not know enough about the disease to know if things linger on surfaces and in the air. Ms. Murray asked how many requests have been made for access described by Ms. Nuccio to attend a remote Council meeting. Ms. Hancock responded that they have not had any requests.

Mr. Reagan commented that he trusts the citizens and himself to make the best decisions for their own safety. He supports remaining hybrid and noted that more people attend hybrid meetings.

Ms. Yudichak commented that COVID is going through quickly and they do not have many town employees as it is. Last week nearly an entire department was out. She expressed concern about residents going to town hall and not having staff available. Ms. Yudichak noted that she likes being in Council Chambers, but most people attend remotely. If it is only for a couple of weeks, she does not think it will harm much.

Mr. Luba noted that no one has asked for accommodations because the Implementer Law just took effect and they have not had a remote meeting since that time. As far as the equipment, he asked if a Councilor could take be trained and run it. People have their own agency and if they do not want to attend in person they may participate remotely including Council members. Ms. Hancock noted that anyone could be trained to operate the equipment. If meetings remain hybrid, she would likely still attend the meetings and manage the equipment. The mask mandate would still be in place.

Mr. Khan commented that he wants to have business as usual at town hall. If he does have something he does not want to spread it and wants town hall to be kept safe. He asked if with the remote option if the Council Chair and Vice Chair need to be in Council Chambers. Mr. Jones explained that they have been able to manage remote meetings when a Councilor has had a technical issue.

Ms. Murray motioned

BE IT RESOLVED by the Tolland Town Council that it hereby approves conducting remote only public meetings until further notice with a review of the status at the second meeting in February 2022.

Ms. Yudichak seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken.

Aye: Yudichak, Murray, Khan, Jones

Nay: Reagan, Luba, Nuccio,

Motion passed.

- 8.3 Appointments to vacancies on various municipal boards/commissions
 - 8.3.a. Appointment to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
 - 8.3.b. Reappointment to the Ethics Commission
 - 8.3.c. Reappointments to the Tolland Water Commission

Mr. Luba motioned to approve the appointments in 8.3.a through 8.3.c.

Ms. Murray seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

9. OLD BUSINESS (ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS):

- 9.1 For the Tolland Town Council to consider a resolution to authorize an engineering study to be conducted on the Birch Grove School grounds for the possible Miracle Field project implementation. This study would be funded in full by the Miracle League and the funds will be deposited with the Town prior to the commencement of the study.

Ms. Hancock reviewed background information and noted that Town Engineer Chuck Eaton is in attendance. She noted that the cost of the study is in the range of \$2,500-\$12K. Ms. Hancock understands the Miracle League has been raising funds and in order to move forward with the study, if the Council desires to do so, the funds would need to be put in place prior to implementation of the study. The funds would need to come from the Miracle League. She noted that Mr. and Mrs. Leibowitz are in attendance as well as other individuals from the Miracle League.

Mr. Leibowitz introduced the representatives in attendance including: Mike Michaud, Head of Miracle League CT; Todd Penney, Consulting Engineer; Stephanie Davis, Miracle League National; AJ Rablowski, ATurf. He referenced the site plan (Proposed Miracle Field Layout) in the presentation, "A Turf's Miracle League Turf System" and commented that some information that the Miracle Field is totally displacing other programs in town is not entirely correct. He explained

that there is enough room in the 85 yds x 55 yds area to put 3 soccer fields. Thus, the Miracle Field would not be totally displacing, taking offline, or creating a tremendous hardship on other programs in town. Additionally, because of the Birch Grove Project, the fields have not been used for 3 years and local teams' programs have worked. Mr. Leibowitz noted that the main reason they wanted this site was because of the infrastructure in place. It would save them \$100K-\$150K based on the subbase that was left when the turf field or grass was restored. His understanding is that topsoil was put down and grass was planted.

Mr. Penney introduced himself and noted that he is a licensed engineer in CT and has been for 20 years. He has been in the engineering field for 32 years and serves as Coventry's Town Engineer. He has been working with the Miracle Field proposal for a couple of years. He explained that other sites were looked at, but Birch Grove was the primary site from a buildability standpoint. He reviewed the Proposed Miracle Field Layout slide. The interior perimeter was the home site of the portable classrooms and had a gravel base suitable for the Miracle Field. A certain depth was removed to put in the topsoil, and he does not have test pit information to know how much gravel remains. Thus, it remains to be seen if the savings they would have had is still fully in place. Mrs. Leibowitz explained a certain amount of subbase is needed under the Miracle Field as was used under the portable classrooms. Mr. Penney noted that they have looked at Cross Farms and Crandall as well, but the pros of the Birch Grove site were cost and multiuse for students.

Mr. Rablowski reviewed the A Turf's Miracle League Turf System (CX 140) including specifications. He noted that that price is approximately \$11.25/square foot. This is installed with a full design. Comparing this field to another turf field would be difficult since they are not the same. Ms. Davis commented that one item many municipalities worry about is maintenance. She explained when compared to typical turf fields, there is no maintenance other than once every 6 months blowing off/cleaning off the turf. Thus, the big difference in cost is no maintenance and they ask Miracle Leagues to set aside money each year to prepare for resurfacing. Most fields last 10-12 years but some last more or less depending on usage. Mr. Michaud explained that they will celebrate the 10th anniversary of their Miracle Field this year. He noted that their surface is a bit different and is a rubber surface predating the turf and it is a year or two out from resurfacing so 10-12 years is a reasonable expectation for longevity. They had 30 players the first year and now have almost 140. They draw from 40 area towns. There are 8 teams (4 games) going every weekend and families are appreciative for their kids to be part of a team. Miracle League draws kids who may not have an opportunity to play in a regular league. He noted that other events are held on the field as well year-round.

Mr. Leibowitz explained that they see the Miracle Field as a community wide development that will bring people into town. The site was chosen based on minimal displacement for other leagues based on other sites. The Committee chose Tolland and wants to invest in Tolland. Tolland was the first choice because of the Birch Grove site. Mr. Leibowitz noted that if the Miracle Field is not placed at the Birch Grove site, they may need to open the search to other towns which may fund or want to contribute to the field. He noted that they have received an outpouring of support for the field including commitments of \$155K since the Council explained that it would take time to get back to them but recommended that they start fundraising. Mr. Leibowitz noted that they cannot do major fundraising until they have a piece of land. He added that the only site they can consider to give exclusivity to Tolland is the Birch Grove site due to potential savings or they would have to open it to other towns. Their first choice is to put the

field in Tolland where they raised their children although they are now Woodstock residents. They want to give this gift to Tolland and will continue to fundraise to replace the field in 12 years. He explained that this separates them from what happened with the THS field and noted that the Miracle Field would be zero cost to Tolland. Mr. Leibowitz noted that another question that has been raised is about a succession plan. He explained that 40-50 people are involved in the project so if anything happened to them, the project would go on. Mrs. Leibowitz added that families of athletes who have been in the program and are now grown are still willing to help and new families are always getting involved. In terms of cost, they may not realize all the savings they looked at with the surfacing but if they tried to find a location in town that was not an existing field, they would be looking at tree removal, fill, and additional expenses.

Mr. Eaton provided background information. When he spoke with Mr. Rosen over the summer the scope of the study was unclear so a range was provided based on looking at possible areas in town for the field with Public Works, and the Director of Recreation. The other end of the scale would include having athletic field engineers do a study of opportunities in town and prepare a report that could be used by the Miracle Field and the town. Mr. Jones confirmed that the range would be lower on the scale if it was a specified location rather than searching for possible locations in the community.

Mr. Khan commented that he supports the Miracle Field and would like to have it in Tolland but does not want to hurt other kids and displace them. He asked what the cost would be if the field was moved elsewhere. Also, how would 2 soccer games be managed at the same time. Mr. Michaud explained that their Miracle Field is used exclusively by their organization and is in a little league complex with 3 other regular baseball fields, a playground, a concession facility, and restrooms. Thus, they have never had conflicts. Mr. Leibowitz asked Ms. Murray if she is aware of what was removed at Birch Grove. The cost estimate at the time for the field was approximately \$400K if all of the gravel remained. Mr. Luba called a point of order and noted that he believes the Chair should be directing at this point. Mr. Jones noted questions should be going through the Chair and the Councilors should be the primary people asking questions. He asked Ms. Murray to address the question posed, if she could do so, since Mr. Khan's question was not fully answered. Ms. Murray explained that her understanding of the reclamation of the field was that some of the subbase was removed, primarily the insulation subbase under the modulars, and gravel was kept but she does not know how much although believes enough gravel was kept to properly grade the field. Thus, there would be different levels of gravel in different areas of the field. She noted the electrical connection was left in place as well as the drainage for the modulars.

Mr. Luba noted that he was part of the Birch Grove Building Committee and a member of the Town Council when this was discussed. He commented that it has been said that the Council decided to push this off etc. but the driving force was that the Birch Grove project was a state project being directed by the state. He added that the state said if they did the Miracle Field project, the state would not pay for any of the grading or other work in the area. This was not decided by the Birch Grove Building Committee or the Council. Regarding the depth of the gravel, if they go forward with the study, the town engineer can learn from the construction company how much was left. Mr. Luba's recollection is along the lines of Ms. Murray and that it was only enough to make it to grade where needed so some of the savings that were anticipated are no longer there. Mr. Luba commented that on several occasions it has been said that the field is to

be at Birch Grove or nothing. He asked if this is accurate and added that he supports the field and wants it in Tolland but to say that only Birch Grove will be considered puts the Council in a difficult bind. Looking at Miracle Fields in other places, they are very different than what is being considered for Birch Grove. The other Miracle Fields are compounds with concessions and infrastructure for support. He noted that at Adam's Adventure there is an existing handicap-accessible playground, a restroom, and existing infrastructure. Mr. Luba explained that to say it would be Birch Grove or nothing would be a tough decision and the Council needs to know if they are open to anything recommended by the engineering study. If it is going to be Birch Grove or nothing, he will not go forward with a "yes" vote. Having one option is not an engineering study but the beginning of a project. His understanding is that when this was put on the agenda that they were looking at all possibilities. He asked through the Chair if the Miracle Field program is open to all options.

Mr. Jones directed the question to the Miracle Field group and the town engineer about the scope of study and if it was beyond Birch Grove.

Mr. Leibowitz explained that they would consider other fields but not other sites. They are not willing to undertake a \$700K-\$900K project to clear trees and bring in topsoil and other items. While they would like it at Cross Farms, they did not want to displace the existing soccer fields. Mrs. Leibowitz explained it would be \$200K-300K to clear the land but Birch Grove is already handicap accessible, level, and has an existing parking lot with handicap spaces as well as a loop road for emergencies. Additionally, electrical and drainage is in place. When they talked about saving money it was about if they had acted when construction was still underway and building on the subsurface from the portables but they did not want to interrupt anything with the Birch Grove project and focused on fundraising. Before they focused on the Birch Grove site, they looked around town at where a field could be placed that would not displace anyone. The cost would have been \$700K-\$800K. When looking at existing fields, there are not truly handicap accessible places and would need a grading system for wheelchair accessibility.

Mr. Penney explained that they looked at other fields. One was a wooded section between Adam's Adventure and the soccer fields which is surrounded by wetlands. He noted that it would be a great site from the Miracle Field's position due to it being inclusive to existing infrastructure but would add \$250K to the price tag. He noted if the town wants to partner then it may be an option. Mr. Penney noted that at Crandall the current field has little parking and is poorly ADA compliant. Additionally, it would displace a baseball field and other soccer fields. Birch Grove was taken due to parking and there still being at least 2 fields remaining. He asked the Chair if Mr. Eaton needs to give the Council his scope of services because some of the work has already been done by him and the Miracle Field.

Mr. Luba addressed the Chair noting that given the information it may be appropriate to have a vote postponed until the engineer can talk to the town engineer, get the documentation and information, and present it to the Council. Mr. Jones commented that he believes Mr. Penney was referencing what was provided last year in terms of their design study. The impetus of tonight's discussion is that the town has to have its own study in terms of liability; however, they may see potential savings based on what information Mr. Penney and the Miracle Field can provide to Mr. Eaton in addition to formally finalizing the scope of the study if approved tonight.

Ms. Yudichak commented that what happened at Birch Grove was awful but now they have a brand-new school and an opportunity. She noted there was concern about soccer losing fields and this concerns her as well, but it sounds like they will not lose as many and asked for confirmation. Mr. Leibowitz responded that he believes there would be 4 or 3 fields and the Miracle Field would be available as well. Ms. Yudichak noted that she would like to give Mr. Garritt a chance to respond and asked Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones replied that some response is fine but the scope of the conversation is the parties involved in making the decision – town staff, the Council, and the Miracle Field. He added that if this moves forward, they will have a special joint meeting with the necessary parties. Mr. Garritt commented that the Birch Grove field has always been a soccer field – to say it is not a soccer field is not accurate. The field on the drawing presented was not drawn by someone who played soccer. The length of the field is shown to the fence line which is a safety hazard. Space for spectators is needed between the fields as well. Thus, best case, would be 2 fields aligned horizontally but he does know the storm water management area there may need to be a setback. He noted that there are some structural and logistical reasons why 4 fields are needed co-located. As laid out, it trades a soccer field for a Miracle Baseball Field and a small remaining field. Mr. Jones noted that the study may provide a scope of what the project would need as well as what the remainder of the open site would provide if they go forward with the study. Ms. Yudichak clarified that the study is what and how the fields could be used. Mr. Eaton confirmed that part of his job is to look out for the town and ensure there are not issues going forward. It would benefit the town to do its due diligence and look at a study that would show how the area would be best used if the Miracle Field was not built and possibly moving a field from another area to Birch Grove and putting the Miracle Field at the relocated field's location. He suggested looking at the town's recreation areas as a whole and what would fit best where. Ms. Yudichak commented that she does have concerns, as do others, about soccer. She asked if they played elsewhere when Birch Grove was under construction. Ms. Yudichak asked how long the study would take. Mr. Eaton responded it would likely take a couple of months. Ms. Yudichak confirmed that the study would not interfere with Birch Grove education. Mr. Eaton responded that it would not. Ms. Yudichak commented that the site walk in East Lyme was on Saturday and they mentioned that their gym classes were on the field and accessible for those with special needs. This would be an advantage for all students. She added that some have concerns that the field is not inclusive thinking it is only for special needs children. Mrs. Leibowitz responded that it would not be a field only for disabled athletes. She added that they would like to open it up to senior citizens, veterans, and unified sports as well. Ms. Yudichak commented that the study will provide more information, and everyone wants all children, special education children and those with handicaps, to have someplace to go. She believes it will bring economic growth.

Mr. Reagan commented that the way Mr. Eaton described the study, it would answer all of his questions including if the site is appropriate and the impacts. They have heard a lot about the Miracle Field but the sports leagues have been limited to public participation. Thus, they may need to complete the study and hold a special meeting so the sports leagues can all have a voice. Mr. Reagan supports having the study. Mr. Jones was in agreement. Early on they invited the sports leagues to provide input. At the site walk in East Lyme they discussed a memorandum of understanding between the board of education, the town, and the Miracle Field. If passed, a subsequent joint meeting would be held with the BOE to get its perspective. He asked that Dr. Willett speak this evening to provide input from the BOE on tonight's conversation.

Ms. Nuccio asked if Dr. Willett has any feedback from the BOE. While the schools are town property, the BOE should have a say on this item and having the field at Birch Grove. Dr. Willett commented on behalf of the BOE that they truly appreciate the efforts of the Leibowitz family, Mr. Penney, and others who are advocating for the children. He explained that 3 themes came up in the information provided by the Board with respect to their feedback: location, funding, and historical considerations. In terms of location, some opinions were expressed that an alternative location could be considered to increase the town field opportunities for children versus using part of an existing field. Second, financial considerations were thoughts that there needs to be a comprehensive plan for funding sources for the build, maintenance, upkeep, and renewal of the field. These are crucial for the field's long-term success. If an allocation is not made for long-term upkeep, the field could become unusable. Early estimate for upkeep were \$6K-\$8K annually for sanitizing and grooming. There would need to be an understanding of where this would be incurred before additional feedback could be provided. Without a developed, viable, and ongoing funding model, the periodic renewal of the field could be relegated to the school system through the capital project request process inadvertently which could reduce available resources for educational facilities and maintenance projects that serve students of all exceptionalities. Similar to location, redirecting the schools' capital funding could result in a loss of resources for students versus adding to the resources of the town overall which he believes is the spirit and intention of the effort. Additionally, historically, there is some concern that the development of the artificial turf field at THS resulted in some unresolved issues around maintenance, upkeep, and renewal and there is a desire to learn from that experience and create the best possibilities for future success. The project was presented during the time of the previous Board, is being discussed during the tenure of this Board, and if approved would likely be approved during the tenure of a future Board so ultimately this is a town decision for the greatest opportunities of success to be actualized. The town will benefit from a plan for how it wants to approach field development, both natural and synthetic, and its capacity to support such development via a long-term plan.

Ms. Nuccio noted that she is a long-time fan of soccer and people have reached out to her. She explained that the Birch Grove Project displaced the teams for a couple of years. Soccer and lacrosse struggled not having the fields available. Games and practices had to be cancelled. Thus, she does not want people to say that the teams did not play at Birch Grove for a couple of years so they are not being displaced. There will be displacement. Ms. Nuccio explained that the 85x55 area would not be large enough to house 3 fields – possibly 2 which would still displace 2 teams of field space, and this concerns her. That said, Ms. Nuccio noted that she is in favor of the Miracle Field. Sports are a vital pathway for everyone. If they get the Miracle Field, she would like to have Kevin's Kourt as well as everyone should know what it feels like to dunk a basketball. Sports are important to everyone regardless of ability and having a place where everyone can do that is important to her. Ms. Nuccio explained that she would like to understand the opportunities to place the fields elsewhere. Ideally, she would like to see them at Cross Farms or Adam's Adventure given the infrastructure in place, but she recognizes it would be a larger cost to the project. She would like to know what the cost is so they can discuss if it would make more sense. If they say yes to the Miracle Field at Birch Grove, they need find room for soccer and lacrosse and would need another field elsewhere because teams are being displaced making it harder for those kids to play. From the engineering study she would like to know the other options either for Miracle Field or for subsequent fields for soccer and lacrosse for everyone to have the same level of availability. She would also like to know the cost to have the Miracle Field at Cross Farms so a full picture is available.

Ms. Murray commented that to the best of her recollection the Birch Grove Building Committee did not go to the state to get its opinion about submitting a change order to add the Miracle Field to the project. The committee advised, and the Council decided, that due to concerns about delays and the complications involved with adding an extra component to the Birch Grove field reclamation project, that it was not appropriate to pursue it any further. She believes there is a potential for cost savings using the space at Birch Grove and that there is gravel that would allow this project to save money if the Miracle Field was put there. The community focuses a lot on kids and sports. Having sports available with beautiful spaces for parents to watch their kids play sports, and playgrounds for younger kids is a wonderful part of being in Tolland. The idea of expanding this experience beyond the children of normal ability is wonderful. The Leibowitz family has shown a substantial dedication to the special needs community. Ms. Murray agrees that there is a concern about displacement and hopes that instead of seeing this as a negative that it is seen as an opportunity to expand the town's fields option. She thanked the Leibowitz family for bringing this opportunity and raise heads to look for other field opportunities in town. Ms. Murray asked what the scope of work is for the engineering study. Would it include looking for spaces for soccer and lacrosse if the Miracle Field was put at Birch Grove? Mr. Eaton responded that they would look at this and what the best fit would be for the town within the overall plan. Ms. Murray commented that this is an opportunity to make that evaluation and understands that the study would be paid for by the Miracle Field League and asked for confirmation. Mr. Leibowitz responded that it should be a shared cost by all of the sports leagues in town. The Miracle Field League should not pay for a study, without a commitment to the Birch Grove site. If the engineers returned, and a commitment was made for the Miracle Field to be at the Birch Grove site, they would pay for a larger engineering study to see where soccer and lacrosse could go. He explained that he does not want to breach his fiduciary responsibility to the donors, pay \$12K, and return and say that it will not work. If this is a partnership to expand fields and find a place for the Miracle Field, they are willing to share the cost. Mrs. Leibowitz commented that when the study was recommended in May and they were trying to push this project along so it could be done before construction was completed, they said they would pay for the study, but that study was specifically at the Birch Grove site. It is a much bigger study to determine where the Miracle Field could go in and where other teams would go. It would also be a larger timeframe for them to wait for an answer. Ms. Murray explained that the question before the Council is about an engineering study funded by Miracle Field to understand the viability of that field. If they are hearing now that due to an expansion of the study, the Miracle Field is not prepared to move forward independently, then it changes the matter before the Council. Mr. Jones believed this was a correct assumption and it would be incumbent on the Council to postpone this topic to get further clarification. If the discussion is going to be expanded to covering alternative locations for what may or may not be able to be at Birch Grove any longer, it is escaping the intent of the agenda item. Mr. Leibowitz referred to the agenda item, its background, and the draft resolution. The discussion has expanded beyond this. Mrs. Leibowitz noted that they would be willing to fund the study if it was exclusively for Birch Grove and that if an agreement could be made that if the study came back positive that the field would be built. They are willing to take this risk.

Ms. Murray commented that it seems that the Council is interested in seeing the study be broader than what is in the agenda. She asked if Mr. Eaton could review what would be involved in evaluating alternate sites not for Miracle Field but for other leagues that may be displaced due to the

development of Miracle Field. Mr. Eaton responded that they could do a master plan study of the fields in town in general and look at the Birch Grove site separately knowing what may be displaced by Miracle Field and how it would fit in the overall master plan. The more that is added to the scope, the closer they are to the higher end of the fee scale. Ms. Murray recommended to the Chair that the Council move to the next item and that the Interim Town Manager work with the Miracle Field League to understand their willingness for an engineering study based on the comments of the Councilors and what they may be looking for in a companion study and get pricing so the Council can consider the larger picture.

Mr. Jones commented that unless Councilors are comfortable moving forward with the resolution or the agenda item as laid out, they should postpone this item given the concerns and questions raised.

Mr. Luba commented that this is now a situation where there needs to be an agreement in writing – not just a discussion between the Town Manager and the Miracle Field people. Something needs to be put in writing specifically outlining what is going to be in the study and who will be responsible for what. He explained that from what they have heard it sounds like for the Miracle Field that it is Birch Grove or nothing and it is the only thing they will agree to. Mr. Luba commented that this ties the Council's hands and if the engineering study comes back saying that Birch Grove is a good location, then they would have to go forward with it. The agreement being presented is untenable because the Council is being asked that if the engineering study is good, then they may go forward and build it and he does not believe the Council is any position to do this. Mr. Luba recommended that this item be tabled and that the Town Manager sit down with the Miracle Field people and possibly get the town's attorneys involved to get an agreement so it is clearly set out what the expectations are and what will happen so there are no hard feelings or misunderstandings. They are now talking about money, contracts, and Miracle Field going forward with an expense on something which could create a promissory situation and could sue for specific performance if the town does not agree, or something goes sideways. Thus, a legal agreement is needed with the terms and legal obligations for each side and the parameters. He believes this is due diligence on all sides so there are no misunderstandings of the expectations. Mr. Luba requested that this item be tabled.

Ms. Nuccio referenced the Tolland webpage where it states, "Birch Grove grounds or alternative locations". She understands that Mr. and Mrs. Leibowitz want the study to be on the usage of Birch Grove, but as a Council the question has always been if Birch Grove is the best site for it. The Council needs to determine this before making a commitment. As much as she wants the field, they cannot consider moving forward unless they can find homes for the others and determine if the Miracle Field would be better at a different location. Ms. Nuccio believed this is what the engineering study would examine. Thus, she is concerned with approving this as is. It is committing the Council to saying that the Miracle Field has to be at Birch Grove and they cannot make that commitment without the engineering study. Mr. Jones agreed that this is a potential interpretation.

Ms. Yudichak commented that the resolution clearly states that the study is for Birch Grove. If it comes back that all of the fields cannot be squeezed in, that would be another conversation. She agrees they should be looking somewhere else but if they get lawyers involved at this point, Mr. and Mrs. Leibowitz may just say that Tolland does not believe in them and take their business

somewhere else. She understands the concerns, but they are not giving them a chance. If Mr. and Mrs. Leibowitz are willing to pay for the survey out of their pocket, she does not understand why this is being pushed out a third time. Mr. Jones noted that he appreciates her perspective. He added that at the late hour it is difficult for the Council to make a reasonable conclusion with some of the concerns that were raise. He noted that he is unsure if the resolution is in the meeting packet so a concern may be if they can move forward with the resolution if it is not laid out in the packet/published.

Mr. Khan noted that he would like to hear comments from Mr. Penney.

Ms. Yudichak asked whose fault it is that the resolution was not included. Mr. Jones recognized the question and noted that Mr. Khan was recognized and had a question. Mr. Jones noted the late hour and recommended that the item be postponed.

Mr. Jones invited Mr. Penney to offer commentary. Mr. Penney explained that he e-mailed Mr. Eaton about talking tomorrow about what he has done and discussing the scope of work. The plan he put together only outlined the open area. He hopes the Council has a little more confidence in their neighboring town's town engineer not to project the limit of a field to go up against a fence. He was only giving the rectangular area of how much was there and not implying that it would be the limit of the soccer field. He asked that they have more confidence in their resident, member of the Inlands Wetlands Agency, and local neighboring town engineer. He believes they could get 2 fields in the area and recommended this item be postponed.

Ms. Nuccio motioned to postpone this topic to the next Council meeting pending a discussion between the Miracle Field, the town engineer, and the Town Manager's Office to have a more concise resolution or agreement about the study.

Ms. Murray seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Luba commented that there are a lot of moving parts and if a written agreement is not done in 2 weeks, he does not want it on the agenda when there is still a lack of clarity. The Council should see the written agreement between the Miracle Field and the town as far as the scope of the study as part of the agenda. Ms. Yudichak commented that this should be done as quickly as possible. Mr. and Mrs. Leibowitz have been waiting a long time. In item 9.1 it states, "Consideration of a resolution" and when they talk about this next time they need to include the resolution and vote on it.

A roll call vote was taken:

Aye: Reagan, Luba, Nuccio, Murray, Jones

Nay: Yudichak, Khan

Motion passed.

10. REPORT OF THE INTERIM TOWN MANAGER

- Mask mandates remain in place. Ms. Hancock is working with some businesses in town and has spoken with the corporate office of Big Y which will increase signage and announcements in the store.
- The new program with the interactive map for the economic development page is going live.

11. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- 11.1 December 28, 2021 Remote Meeting Minutes

Mr. Luba motioned to accept the minutes as laid out in 11.1.

Mr. Reagan seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

12. CORRESPONDENCE TO COUNCIL

(Received through 6:30PM this evening)

- E-mail forwarded of a CT DEEP climate change newsletter
- Request for creation of a DEI (Diversity Equity and Inclusion) committee with an outline of activities it might provide
- 3 separate e-mail requests to implement a townwide mask mandate
- Request for better salting of the roads
- Expression of thanks for doing a good job of salting the roads
- 3 e-mails expressing support for Miracle Field
- E-mail asking for a full of cost, including maintenance, of Miracle Field
- E-mail expressing support for Miracle Field but not on the Birch Grove site
- E-mail supporting the recommendations of the Mental Health Task Force; questions for the EHHD; support for the Miracle Field

13. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

- Chair Hour – the Chair & Vice Chair of the PZC were in attendance.
- Next Chair Hour – February; and e-blast will be sent

14. COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS FROM COUNCILPERSONS

- Ms. Murray asked if an updated schedule for the Town Manager search was available. Mr. Jones responded that Mr. Wilkinson will send a communication.

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

Dave Garritt thanked the Council for inviting him and his fellow athletic club presidents this evening. He believes there is a frustration at least by himself that there seems to be a lot going on behind the scenes with the Miracle Field. The club presidents are stakeholders in this and have not been part of the process. He cited the example of the discrepancy in the drawing of the field and fences. It is the first time Mr. Garritt saw the drawing and he noted that only the outline was shown. They have not had seat at the table for any of the discussions and he was a bit frustrated this evening that he was limited to 2 minutes of public participation as an invited guest. The Tolland Soccer Club has over 500 current youth members and have a seat at the table. At the end of the day, they want to do what is best for Tolland and the Miracle Field is a great opportunity, but they want it to be additive and not a replacement where they are trading soccer for Miracle Field baseball.

Tim Griffin, 80 Doe Run, thanked the Council for having him to talk about the Miracle Field. Having the teams and leagues back to discuss this, as noted by Mr. Reagan, makes sense. Mr. Griffin agrees with Mr. Garritt's comments. He added that 4 hours and 37 minutes has to be a record for Council meeting and thanked the members for all that they do.

16. **ADJOURNMENT**

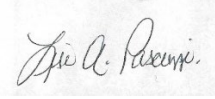
Ms. Nuccio motioned to adjourn the meeting at 11:38 PM:

Ms. Yudichak seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Pascuzzi
Town Council Clerk

Town Council Chair