

**Minutes
Town Council Special Budget Meeting
March 14, 2016
Town Hall Annex**

3. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.
Present: Julie Blanchard, Matthew O'Brien, Thomas Pope, Lisa Thomas, Richard Williams, Hannah Pietrantonio, Andy Brodersen
Also present: John Elsesser, Town Manager; Beth Bauer, Finance Director; David Petrone, Superintendent of Schools; Robert Carroll, School Business Director; Board of Education Members Michael Sobol, Eugene Marchand, Jennifer Beausoleil, Mary Kortmann, William Oros, Frank Infante.

3. New Business:

Motion #15/16-319: Matthew O'Brien made a motion to move up item 3A as the next order of business. The motion was seconded by Andy Brodersen and carried on unanimous vote.

15/16-76: Consideration/Adoption: Sunshine Proclamation: Thomas Pope said he requested time on the agenda because this week is the nationally-designated week to recognize the need for transparency in government. He would hope that the Town of Coventry and Board of Education would expand their efforts to bring greater transparency to all we do.

Sunshine Week was launched by the American Society of News Editors in March 2005. This non-partisan, non-profit initiative is celebrated in mid-March each year to coincide with James Madison's birthday on March 16. Though created by journalists, Sunshine Week is about the public's right to know what its' government is doing, and why. The week provides us an opportunity to shine a spotlight on our goal to increase transparency in government.

Sunshine Week seeks to enlighten and empower people to play an active role in their government at all levels, and to give them access to information that makes their lives better and their communities stronger. This year Sunshine Week runs from March 13 to March 19th.

Motion #15/16-320: Thomas Pope moved that the Coventry Town Council adopt the following proclamation:

Sunshine Week Open Government Proclamation

Section 1:

WHEREAS, James Madison, the father of our federal Constitution, wrote that "consent of the governed" requires that the people be able to "arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives," and

WHEREAS, every citizen in our participatory democracy has an inherent right to access to government meetings and public records; and

WHEREAS, an open and accessible government is vital to establishing and maintaining the people's trust and confidence in their government and in the government's ability to effectively serve its citizens; and

WHEREAS, the protection of every person's right of access to public records and government

meetings is a high priority of the Coventry Town Council, and WHEREAS, the Coventry Town Council is committed to openness and transparency in all aspects of its operations and seeks to set a high standard in this regard; and

NOW, THEREFORE, the Coventry Town Council commits during this Sunshine Week, commemorating the anniversary of James Madison's birth, and throughout the year to work diligently to enhance the public's access to government records and information, to increase information provided electronically and online, and to ensure that all meetings of deliberative bodies under its jurisdiction, and their committees, are fully noticed and open to the public.

Section 2:

TOWARD THAT END, the Coventry Town Council hereby directs that: The Town Manager to facilitate the activation of on line access to town records for financial transactions through the use of the Opengov software program on April 15th 2016.

Matthew O'Brien seconded the motion. Lisa Thomas said she knows OpenGov is something that was presented to the previous Council and was under discussion in Finance. Is it ready to roll out on April 15th? Beth Bauer replied we are ready to go at any point in time. It is a platform that can be modified so we have been looking for feedback and commentary so we can design it to accomplish what you want it to accomplish, which is to provide information about financial transactions in a way that is easy to understand. We are working to define the best interface but we can certainly get it out there for public access. Richard Williams asked how soon we expect the Board of Education to be on it. John Elsesser said at this point not expecting the Board of Education to be on it. This is based on our financial software platform. The Board of Education software is owned by a different vendor that has their own product. We can't say with any certainty that it can be linked. We use Admins software and they use Munis. Maybe a bridge can be built but it would have to be developed. Richard asked Robert Carroll how long he thinks it would take. Robert replied we haven't investigated it. He understands it was a grant the Town got. Thomas noted his proclamation didn't address the Board of Education – that was just a side comment. **Motion #15/16-320 carried on unanimous vote.**

2. Unfinished Business:

A. 15/16-69: FY 2016-2017 Budget: Board of Education.

Julie Blanchard welcomed members of the Board of Education and School Administration. Introductions were made. She outlined responsibilities of the Board of Education and Town Council in developing the budget and thanked the Board of Education for the information they have provided, which was included with the Council agenda packet. She summarized responses to the questions as follows.

Questions 1-3: relevant forms were provided.

Question 4 – We had asked for a student census for the last 3 years. We got the information but it is confusing regarding the pre-k numbers. Also the bond rating report gives us a student census number. We want to ask about the information you gave us that includes pre-k. On the form it says 28 pre-k students but are those in the Board of Education's student's count? David Petrone said that is correct. Prior to this year we got pre-k students and they were Special Ed students and we have a legal obligation to educate them. That is the reason we have a partnership with CECC so they could be with their peers. Until we began the Smart Start grant any student was identified who was aged 3-4 years old.

Thomas Pope said he is wondering why the number the Board provided for the bond issue – the historical record and projected number is different. When we represented to borrow money for the bond it wasn't the same. John Elsesser said the official enrollment date is October 1 and we asked for the number in June. Matthew O'Brien said we asked for June and October but that is not the point.

Matthew O'Brien said he had heard that pre-k is self-sustaining. David Petrone replied we got a grant for \$75,000 per classroom for operational expenses and hired teachers and para-educators. Salary increases will be covered by tuition. Matthew asked what the grant pays for, and what the Town is responsible for other than Special Ed for pre-k. Robert Carroll said we have tuition income that parents pay. We used it to buy a Smart Board recently. David mentioned the purchase of cabinets. Matthew asked if the Board is budgeting money for pre-k. David replied no. Matthew said so it is not really in per-pupil expenditures. He had thought they had said they are included in per-pupil expenditures. David replied the Special Education students we have an obligation to are included in the Special Education budget. The other Smart Start students are not. Matthew asked if they know the percentage. David replied not right off hand – he would have to have the grant in front of him, but he can get the information. He will get a breakdown and email the Council.

Richard Williams asked exactly how many preschool children do you have by classroom. David Petrone said by district 12.3% of students are Special Ed. Andy Brodersen asked how many are preschool. David replied 28. Richard asked of the 28 what would be the expenditure the Town is responsible for. David said he could get the information. Richard asked what the total enrollment is for preschool. David replied we have 30 students in two Smart Start classes. He is not sure how many CECC has - maybe 100. Matthew asked if they reimburse the Board of Education. David replied they pay rent.

Matthew O'Brien asked if special needs still includes gifted and talented. David replied that we are required by law to have an IEP for gifted and talented students but we are not obligated to have a program for them.

Thomas Pope said he is looking at the racial profile for different grades. It is pretty even except in pre-k. What causes the imbalance? It is two-thirds male one-third female. David replied he can't say - anecdotally more males are identified as autistic.

Matthew O'Brien asked if all the pre-k students are Coventry residents. David replied that all the Smart Start students are because the grant dictates that. The CECC program is private. We do not oversee that program but he believes it is open to other students outside Coventry.

Richard Williams asked if Special Ed includes gifted and talented. David replied no – they are not identified in Special Education. Lisa Thomas said she is a specialist in gifted and talented. Those regulations come under Special Education. She doesn't do the reporting but those definitions do fall under Special Education. Richard asked if there are programs for gifted and talented. David replied we do have programs, called Challenge Enrichment. We just expanded them to cover the k-5 level. Richard asked what the total expenditure is for that. David replied he could get back to them with the information.

Andy Brodersen asked how long the preschool program has been in effect. David replied we have been associated with CECC for approximately 30 years. Andy asked if Special Ed has always been in that group. David replied the whole reason we are involved in pre-k at all is that we are legally obligated to provide services to Special Ed students. It is why we partnered with CECC. Then we got the Smart Start grant opportunity. Andy asked whether the State provides reimbursement. David replied we get some reimbursement.

Thomas Pope said he sees two different numbers for enrollment projections next year. The numbers provided on October 1st are not the same. One chart shows 1502 and the other chart shows 1573. Robert Carroll replied one of the reports was not created by our office. Thomas asked John Elsesser where he got the report that says Superintendent's Office. Beth Bauer replied we worked with the Board of Education to get those numbers. Thomas asked what number we are going to work with. Robert replied the good numbers are in the landscape report, which is data that has a unique identifier for each student. It allows better tracking with transient populations. We get a lot of kids that come in and go out. Depending on how and when the question is asked we can generate a report. John said he is wondering if the difference could be outplacements. Robert replied that the number shown is students that are in our schools.

Matthew O'Brien said we have a lot of children being put into group homes. Do they appear in our census? David replies it includes any student we are responsible for. Usually with group homes in town, there are students that attend our schools. Either they have no nexus and we are responsible for them, or they have a town that is responsible and they pay. If they are in our schools they should be on the list. Richard asked which list. David said the racial survey is the correct list - that is audited. Robert asked Beth if her sheet has some sort of projection tool. Beth said no. If the numbers are different perhaps there could be an error. She and Robert can go back and reconcile the numbers to come up with an answer.

Thomas asked if there were any alterations to the budget between the time the notebooks were delivered and it was posted online. David replied no – the only changes that were made included two retirements and one resignation. The Board went through and made many minor adjustments but major items are included. Jen Beausoleil said the online document and the notebook are same. Thomas replied there are places where the documents are different. Line item 100406111100 and on the same page item 100405112121. On the printed version we received, that page doesn't exist but on the other version there is a page that gives projected costs for out-of-district placements. He wants to know if that is the actual number or projected. Robert said we added 3% to project. Lisa Thomas said the rest of us don't have this information. Robert said you are looking at the budget vs. actual. If you look at the management report you should see a surplus under tuition.

Thomas Pope asked about item 1000.40.739.1115 in Central Office - Other Equipment/Computer Education and how many iPads are in that budget on that line. David Petrone replied zero. Thomas asked why on his copy it says iPads, carts. David replied they are iPad charging carts. The comma is an error. Thomas asked how does the content change if you are copying things. David replied we have the same copy. Thomas replied that the online copy doesn't show that. He noted line 1000.40.611.2130 for instructional supplies health services at \$1003. He found that expense online but it is not in his printed version. Robert Carroll replied he doesn't know. Julie Blanchard said we got one notebook with a printed copy of the budget from Board of Education. Lisa Thomas asked where did that notebook go, and how do the rest of us access that information. It should be same as what is online. John Elsesser said we emailed out to the whole Council saying we had one hard copy and it's coming online. Then we notified the whole Council that the online version was available. Like the Town budget there are probably some corrective pages. David asked Robert to discuss the process of posting the budget online. Robert said his document has various different colors. The Superintendent's version is created in early January. Any revisions that are made get a new color when they are inserted. Thomas said he can understand how pages get twisted but he doesn't understand how the word iPads is missing. Robert said the next page is that page in our version. Thomas said he doesn't understand why the pages are not the same. He doesn't think anybody did anything with malicious intent but you should know the pages are not the same. David said we did make some changes but he doesn't think there was any malicious intent. Thomas said the reason we

found it was because we were looking at the subject of iPads and there was some confusion. We were looking at how the program worked and the numbers didn't make sense. We know you have a 4-year initiative for iPads. He asked for an explanation of how they are being rolled out. David said we began with grade 10 because there was a map resource that we could use. We continued with grade 10 in the second year and then grades 9 and 10 last year. Thomas asked if grades 9 and 10 were in last year's budget. David said we used money from last year's savings to purchase some of them. Matthew O'Brien asked if iPads for 10th grade were in the budget. David said yes. We left some of that money in there and ended up using \$131,000. Thomas asked if this is the 4th year of the initiative. David replied that is correct. Matthew said they have already bought 4 years in 3 years. David said we are buying new iPads for 9th grade. Robert said this year would be the 4th year. The current budget does not have an allocation for iPads. We bought the 9th and 10th grade ones last year. Matthew asked who has the iPads now - grades 9-12? Robert replied yes. Jen Beausoleil noted we have to keep buying them. Lisa Thomas noted the ones the current seniors use have been in use for 3 years. Thomas said those would be year 4 replacements in the budget. David said if we didn't buy the 9th grade ones last year we would be buying them this year. Mary Kortmann said we would always have to double up because we started in 10th grade. We are trying to get to the point where they would get new ones in 9th grade. In between because of the way we purchased them we have to decide which ones could go to the lower grades and which ones could go back to Apple. Thomas said there are 1300 iPads plus they are buying 190. David said staff has iPads as well.

Richard Williams asked for an explanation of the iPad program - how did we end up with 1300 iPads and why do we need them. Mary Kortmann replied we are doing a one-to-one initiative at the high school because that is where it made the most sense to start. We are looking at whether we should have them all the way to kindergarten. We have tech carts where resources are shared. The Middle School is very close to one-to-one. The science and social studies teachers all have lessons around the iPad all the way through all the grades. Lisa Thomas said a lot of schools are moving to Google classroom. It runs on the iPad. Richard asked if every student in Coventry has access to an iPad. David Petrone replied yes. Only the high school students take them home. Richard asked how many other districts have similar programs. David mentioned some he is aware of including North Branford, Glastonbury, Newington, Windsor and Willington. Richard asked if most of our curriculum is around iPads. David replied no – the technology isn't imbedded. It is not a standalone item; it is a resource. Richard asked if the iPads we have throughout the system are integrated throughout the curriculum. David replied yes. The CT Core Standards are what we use for curriculum. Richard asked if it specifies iPads. David said no – it doesn't specify a device. Thomas asked if the replacement is due to the operating system or whether they just get old. David replied that eventually you can't upgrade the operating system. They recommend using a 4-year life and if we do that we can get a reasonable expectation of buy-back from Apple. We are trying to put a thoughtful replacement plan in place. Thomas asked if they have made a concrete decision on what they are doing with the ones they are replacing. David replied we have considered a lot of different ideas - selling them to the students, pushing them down to lower grades, etc. We found out Apple isn't too pleased with a large volume of sales as we can be considered a dealer. Now we are pursuing selling them back to Apple with a future purchase credit. Thomas said he would hope they would consider offering them to other departments within town. The Library might be able to use them if the Town owns the facility. David thanked him for the idea. Andy Brodersen asked why a student graduating from high school would want to buy an iPad that isn't good anymore. David said we didn't say it is not any good – it just gets to a point where it can't be upgraded. Andy asked if the iPads that are taken home can be used for other purposes. David replied no. Andy asked how that is monitored. David replied we have management software that monitors what the students are using them for. No Facebook, Snapchat, etc. is allowed. Thomas asked if an iPad can do as much as a Nook. David said that iPads are user friendly. Thomas asked why they are also buying Nooks. Mary Kortmann said they are used in the Library Media Center.

Andy Brodersen asked if any schoolbooks are published electronically and able to be put on the iPads. David Petrone replied yes. Andy asked why then are textbooks costs continuing to rise. David replied just because they are electronic doesn't mean they are free. Companies have figured out a way to make money. Some books have upfront costs with annual fees, etc. We thought the price would come down but we do like the fact that the books don't get beat up.

Matthew O'Brien said he was at the budget presentation the other day and was impressed with the Board's ability to get grants – are there any for iPads? David Petrone replied we just got a \$35,000 state grant and will use it specifically for iPads. That will be for 8th grade students next year. They were purchased in this year's budget for next year.

Richard Williams asked how much time the kids are using iPads at school and home. David Petrone replied it depends on the class. It has increased every year. Initially there was a learning curve and training for staff. Also IT people in the classrooms. Whenever you introduce new technology, the second it doesn't work they abandon it. We had to make sure teachers understood how to integrate it into lessons so it would be seamless; we had to make sure the Wi-Fi works, etc. Each year it gets better. If the Council ever wants to do a walk-through to see the technology in action we would welcome you. Richard asked how much time children in the high school are actually spending on the iPads. David replied we don't have an actual number. There are 6.4 hours in the school day. We could try to get a number. We ask the teachers to actively use it. We monitor with instructor walk-throughs, student discussion groups, etc. Richard noted they have the ability to monitor their usage - wouldn't you want to know how much time is being spent? David said we monitor in the ways that were mentioned. There is not a set amount of time that validates them. It depends on the nature of the lesson and how it is incorporated. Richard said it seems like they would have a better idea of how much time is spent on such a big project. David said he can check but he doesn't know if it would be accurate because the iPads are on all the time. We try to monitor whether students are using them in the classroom and are using them appropriately.

Matthew O'Brien asked what the cost for the iPad is per child. David Petrone replied \$650, which includes 3-year Apple Care, a case, etc. The family kicks in \$25 for insurance. Matthew said he was looking at budgets for each year and they only had \$22,000 for iPads. Mary Kortmann said last year it was cut after the Town Council cut the budget. The way we handled that cut was to take it from salary savings. Matthew asked how much did the 9th and 10th grade iPads cost. Robert Carroll said \$130,000.

Andy Brodersen asked if the school also has laptops. David Petrone replied yes there are some in the district. Andy asked if there are also hard computers. David said yes – we still have some labs at the middle school and high school. We took some of our old laptops and converted them to Chromebooks. We still have some computers on wheels. Andy asked if the high school students still go to computer labs. David said yes – there is some Tech Ed use but primarily we use the labs for testing.

Thomas Pope asked about the iPads that are in the lower grades - did they get all those in the last 3 years? David Petrone said we may have gotten a few down there - mostly for Special Ed. He doesn't have a specific number but he knows we purchased some prior to this initiative. Matthew O'Brien asked if he knows how old those are. David said we could send a breakdown. Thomas said if they didn't buy all 1300 in the past three years then they must have some old ones. David said there are eight iPad 2s. We are buying iPad Airs. Jennifer Beausoleil said with some of the older models they will probably no longer push the security patches. Matthew asked if there is going to be a need to buy 800 iPads in one year. David said we are trying to find the best way to avoid that huge hit. It is a concern. It wouldn't be advantageous to present a budget that includes that number. Matthew asked if

Apple projects when they are going to stop supporting something. David said he doesn't think so. Matthew asked how we can plan – it is a challenge. David replied it appears they go every 3-4 years. In his experience the battery starts to diminish, etc. Some districts have purchased Chromebooks at the low end and a year later they are worthless. Mary Kortmann said we are working with Apple to determine what they will pay to give them back at various ages. After year 5 if Apple won't take them then we have to figure out if they can be sold anywhere else, or whether it is best to hold them until they are at zero. Matthew asked if that is because they bought the 9th grade ones ahead. Mary said no, the 4-year ones are still the age they are. Matthew asked if they were purchased in different line items every time. Mary said she thinks the first set was done through the Capital budget. Matthew asked for 5-year look-back on iPads and a projected budget.

Lisa Thomas asked if school districts are required to have a 3-year technology plan. David Petrone said we were told it was no longer required at the last minute. We did develop one. Lisa asked if it is current. David said yes. Lisa asked if we could see it. David said yes. Lisa said she is not sure whether other Council member's concerns are more regarding use or expense, but it might be helpful for them to see how the devices are used for testing - and how things are run on one system but not both.

Andy Brodersen asked if Apple has a program for education using iPads where you sign up for a certain amount of time and they automatically take them back. David Petrone said we looked at it – it is a lease program and didn't really save money. It was a 3-year timeline. Mary Kortmann said the other thing was once it ramped up to your full population you were fully committed and there wasn't a way to deal with a bad budget year. It didn't leave us any negotiating room.

Matthew O'Brien said regarding the capital plan he would like to know specifics about the classroom computer upgrade at \$1 million over 4 years. Is there something he could look at that shows what you are going to purchase or is it just a placeholder? Robert Carroll replied the narrative is there but only for the first year. Matthew said he was looking for more detail. John Elsesser reduced it in the Manager's budget. Are there grants that will be helping with this initiative? John said we are hoping we will get an ICE grant. It had been a 30% grant in the past but the State increased it to 50% so it is more competitive. We are trying to get an answer but don't know yet. We have applied twice and have been funded twice. We hope we will get lucky.

Julie Blanchard said she would like to talk about special education expenditures for gifted and talented. How many are projected to age out this year? In the budget they have given how many are in it? David Petrone replied it falls under special services but the costs associated with it are salaries. We are not legally required to provide programs for them. Jennifer Beausoleil said Special Ed expenditures in the budget proposal are only for students currently in the district and projected to be in the district next year. There are no placeholders. Those that are seniors are not included. Julie asked if 3 and 4 year olds are included. David replied the challenge with 3 and 4 year olds are the parents are not required to notify us. We can find out in April. Different situations can come up that turn the budget around. Julie said we asked for some of these answers – we got a chart but thought there was a better report in the past. A strategic school profile used to be available. Robert Carroll said we do have concerns about sharing certain data and were advised legally that if you have one child at a certain school that child can be identified. Julie said the Council typically meets with the Board of Education but so far we have not been able to have this kind of conversation. Some of us are new and need to get up to speed and some of us need a refresher. David said Special Ed in general is very complicated. It is a very challenging situation for every school system to manage and it is one of the largest line items. We are talking about developing a program at the middle school and put more resources into the reading program at the k-5 level. If we don't address areas of challenges the gap continues to widen. It can be as little as \$25,000 to service a Special Ed student in district or as high

as \$200,000 to educate the student outside of district. It is a difficult department to budget for. At any moment a family could move into town with a child with high needs. It is an unanticipated expense there is no way to budget for. We will answer any question you have without identifying specific kids. Jennifer said historically every quarter there has been a joint Fiscal/Finance Committee meeting. There hasn't been a request for one except for the audit. John said we tried to schedule another one – we were invited to a Fiscal meeting but the feeling was there wouldn't be enough time.

Matthew O'Brien asked what "projected" means on the spreadsheet. Mary Kortmann said projected is what is happening this year. It is updated monthly. The bottom line tells us how we are doing compared to the budget. Matthew said this came to us in response to one of our questions and we were told 9 children came into the district. David Petrone said he thinks the majority of the students were in foster care or some were in group homes. It does get expensive. Some of these students are in pretty intensive programs that are costly. Thomas Pope asked if all the State placements in town are Special Ed. Dave not all but a fair number. It is a challenge. It taxes police and ambulance resources as well. Matthew said the information he would like to see is similar to the profile we used to get that includes the number and types of students with particular conditions. David replied we have that information but can't provide it. He doesn't ever remember the Board providing that type of data. Matthew said it used to be in a strategic profile. David thinks the laws have changed and privacy concerns have come into play. Matthew asked how it would identify a particular student. David replied because we are in a small town. Matthew asked if it could be done in executive session. David said he will check but he is 99.9% positive we can't provide it. The majority of towns are getting away from providing identifiable information. Matthew asked what would you be able to give me - he is looking for something he can quantify. Lisa Thomas asked why he would need to know a specific disability. Matthew said he is not asking for that. He shared an example of a report he used to get. David said he would get an answer to that question. Mary said there is a report that we see that could be done without schools.

Matthew O'Brien said regarding the projected number of students there was a surplus. Does that mean the students didn't show up? Mary Kortmann said there were p.o.s that hadn't been cut yet. Tuition items, etc. didn't get processed. Matthew asked aren't they encumbered? Mary said unless it changes - this is done in January/February. It could change in June. An end-of-year IEP may result in a student staying in an in-district program. Sometimes we are able to pull them in. Sometimes they come in and like it, sometimes they don't and go back to outplacement. Jennifer Beausoleil said sometimes an IEP in the fall determines additional services are needed too, so the cost is higher. David Petrone said if you look at the last four years of ED101's, costs have been relatively flat. We have been bringing more and more children back into the district. He invited the Council to come and take a look at the Academy. Mary said there are 7-12 students in the Academy and outplacement costs would be \$100,000 per student.

Andy Brodersen said regarding question #11 about new teachers you are going to add, is the population changing percentage-wise between Special Ed and Regular Ed? David Petrone said historically Coventry as a district has been slightly below the State average. We are about even with the State average now. Andy said so we have more Special Ed and less Regular students. Based on that you are trying to add additional staff for Special Ed. David said primarily. Andy said that makes sense, but you are also adding for Regular Ed, which is decreasing. David replied we have an obligation and if we are wise in how we use our resources, our needs continue to increase even though the population goes down. The additions are to address needs early on in math and social work. We added to address these needs because they only will get bigger. Some of the things we do to prevent Special Education costs are early intervention. The Reading program involves 200 kids - factor the costs if the need goes unmet. Kids should not enter middle school needing reading support. Matthew asked if that is why the majority of Special Ed costs are k-3. David replied yes. A large

number of autistic children are being identified. It is costly but these kids need to be educated. He believes Coventry kids need to be educated in Coventry. Andy said he still doesn't understand. You have a total population that is decreasing. Your Special Ed is increasing. So therefore the percentage for Regular Ed is less and you are adding additional teachers. Why? David replied we are not adding classroom teachers, we are adding resource staff. We discussed how resources shifted over the years. The challenge when enrollment is going down is it doesn't go down all in one grade level. We have to look at what the needs of the kids are and have programs in place for them. We have less classroom teachers at Robertson than we did 5 years ago. Matthew asked if we could we get a list of teachers per grade and paraprofessionals. Jennifer Beausoleil said that information is on the website. Matthew said he has looked at the website thoroughly and can't find that information. Mary Kortmann said it is under District Information.

Thomas Pope said to Mary Kortmann that he recalls last year Special Ed excess cost was budgeted for State reimbursement at 75%. Mary said yes. Thomas asked what the thinking was when it was reduced to 73%. Michael Sobol replied that the State reduced their pool by \$5 million. To be in line we should have reduced ours to 70%. Matthew O'Brien asked what we have gotten historically. Mary said it has been 77-78%, which is why we didn't go all the way down. You have seen the memo telling us not to expect the same level but they don't tell us what to expect and we won't know until they cut the check. Matthew said so they are asking the district to cover it but you still might get it. Michael Sobol said the reduction is the responsible thing to do. Thomas asked David Petrone whether he agreed with the number. David replied he didn't have it when he prepared his budget. Matthew asked if there were other changes between the Superintendent's budget and the Board of Education's. David Petrone said yes and provided some details.

Andy Brodersen asked if teachers have to notify you when they are retiring. David Petrone replied they are not obligated to - some wait until last minute. Andy asked if they had some retirements. David replied yes - two. Andy asked if they budgeted for less experienced staff to replace them. David said yes. The vast majority of staff are younger because older staff left. Matthew O'Brien said the information we got didn't tell us who left employment and how you budgeted to replace them. We only got a chart. When he was on the Board of Education we used to get list of who left, who replaced them and the savings or excess cost. Is that information available? Robert Carroll said he would have to develop a report. He will do that if directed.

Thomas Pope mentioned a job posting he saw in the *Hartford Courant*. It refers to a director. What salary is being held for that position? David Petrone replied approximately \$126,000. We looked at the market. Matthew O'Brien noted it is a hard one to fill. David replied yes. Thomas said they are using a placeholder at the very top dollar. David said yes. Thomas asked why. David replied it is a difficult position to fill. It is hard to find a quality candidate at a lower salary level.

Thomas Pope asked about the number of administrators in the high school/middle school building complex, and why there is no vice principal at the middle school. David Petrone replied the demand and work at each school warrants the number of administrators we have. Anyone can be critical of what we do but our administrators are at the lower end of the pay scale. They work extremely hard and are very talented. We do what we can to keep costs down.

Thomas Pope asked if we are getting any savings from solar power at the high school. David replied we are looking into a problem at the high school right now so not there, but yes at the other sites. John Elssesser said Encon is investigating the high school issue and the Board has brought in GreenBank. The credit is not showing up on the bill. We can see from the charts how much energy is being generated so we can be credited retroactively. Eversource has changed the meters. Thomas said if it is retroactive do we have any indication how much? Mary Kortmann said we flagged the issue in

November. The line item in the budget is going toward the red because we had budgeted savings. Thomas said regarding electricity, back in December out of the capital reserve account there was an expense for a refrigerator/freezer for \$20,000 and then an expense for a contractor to hook it up. Why was this not done in-house - didn't we hire an electrician? David replied we can't find a candidate. Thomas asked how much is spent on electricity services. David replied \$14,000. Thomas asked how much is budgeted for the position. David replied \$50,000. Thomas asked why hire when the cost isn't as high. David replied the position is more than just an electrician. It is a maintainer and does other functions. We are looking for second shift. We feel like we are moving in the right direction if we find a good candidate. Our facilities are getting older. "New" buildings are entering year 17.

Andy Brodersen asked if part time teachers get benefits. David replied yes if they are over 50%. Andy asked if two half time teachers would be less expensive. David said no. Andy noted that they have two half time math specialists - why not one. David replied that is the plan. That's why it was addressed that way.

Julie said she is looking for details on any new programs or projects that would affect the budget. David replied the documents are brand new to the district - they provide qualitative and quantitative data. Matthew said question #16 asks about programs that have ended - we just got a list but he was looking for financial details. Question #27 was very similar. David replied he would be happy to provide more information but it is a lot of work to do it. Mary Kortmann noted there is a page in the budget that shows increases and decreases. Matthew commented he thinks we're approaching the budget differently. David said we ask each principal to go through their budget line by line and tell us what they need. We try to be thoughtful in the process. Then they meet with their department chairs and go through it line by line and review what went up, what went down and why it is important. Matthew said that is the kind of information I am looking for. David replied it is such a lot of detail he wouldn't begin to know how to write it down for him.

Thomas Pope asked if the Board does site budgets. Jennifer Beausoleil said we get a live presentation from the site leaders so we can ask questions. David Petrone said his responsibility is to develop a budget that is supportive of what kids need but is a responsible budget. It would be a lot higher if I could have my dream. He tries to factor all things in. His job is to be the bearer of bad news in areas where cuts are made and we have a collaborative environment. He applauded the Board for getting away from cherry-picking programs. They have that job but trust us to develop appropriate programs. Thomas said in past years we used to see the Superintendent's proposed and Board's budget side by side. Jennifer Beausoleil outlined the current process. Matthew O'Brien said the Superintendent's presentation is not on the website. Mary Kortmann said it was before, because that is what we forwarded to others. Matthew said he cannot find it for this year. He asked if they can make a list of changes between the two. David replied yes.

Thomas Pope said the previous accreditation process showed an attendance rate by students of 96% and teachers at 92%. Has the teacher's rate risen at all? David Petrone replied he doesn't have the information in front of him. Thomas said he was looking at temporary salaries. Recently they suspended a teacher for 3 days. Was that with pay? Is it policy to suspend with pay? David replied that suspension is generally without pay. Administrative leave is generally paid while an investigation takes place. Then there is no liability back to the district for penalizing someone unfairly. Thomas said he would like information about the current rate of attendance for teachers. David said he will get the information. Thomas said he hates the idea that teachers show up less frequently than students. David replied it is his pet peeve too but he has had the flu himself for several days. John Elsesser pointed out that a severe illness for a staff member may skew the data. David noted that sometimes maternity leave is taken without pay.

Matthew O'Brien said when the Board gives out the management report the numbers are pretty close but the budget balance available is different than it is on the expenditure report. Robert Carroll replied we make certain assumptions, i.e. textbooks will be spent. Matthew said we have the June 30 one and thought it would be fairly close. Robert said it should be fairly close. Payroll is not in yet. That was the \$80,000 difference we wanted to transfer in. Matthew replied the difference was more like \$153,000. Robert will get answers. Matthew asked when the excess cost contribution goes in how it is calculated. Mary Kortmann replied it goes in as a negative. Matthew asked if they tailor grants to replace things, or to augment. David replied to support programs currently in existence. Matthew applauded their efforts to get grant funds.

Andy Brodersen said he wants to know a little more about programs. He asked about the CMA Education program of .6 staff - is that a new program? The amount is \$7,321 for .1 FTE. David Petrone replied that is for a music teacher. Matthew O'Brien said the position is going from .9 to 1.0. Andy asked what the cost is for an alternate. David replied \$32,840. The information was copied wrong. He shared the list of new programs and costs from his PowerPoint presentation. It lists every position that is new and the FTE. Andy asked about World Language resources. David replied we are changing the program. The company we are currently using has been purchased and their program will be obsolete. Andy asked if it is available on the iPad. David replied yes. It is a blend of resources, not totally electronic. Andy asked when Connecticut began to require CPR. David replied the legislation passed in the last session. They don't actually have a dictated program in place but we are anticipating it. Andy asked if they have thought of using programs and personnel already in place at firehouse.

Thomas Pope said the Police Department is coming in soon to discuss their budget. In the Superintendent's intro during his budget presentation, it mentions a dramatic number of students in crisis and families in crisis at Robertson School. Is this a result of drug activity? David replied no, most of it is mental health-related issues. The Police Department has been a great friend to us. There were a couple incidents at Robertson over the past couple weeks. One time the police happened to be there and another time we had to call them for support. The Chief was at a Juvenile Review Board program today and talked about awareness of drug issues and what to watch for.

Andy Brodersen asked about the proposal to buy a license for Creative Cloud. If he read this right you are buying quantity of 100 to add to 200 devices. David Petrone replied it is 200 devices at \$25 per device per year. There are well over 200 computers at the high school. We chose the most cost-advantageous method.

Julie Blanchard said we had asked for details on substantial purchases or multi-year purchase plans that were in this budget but not in future ones. David Petrone mentioned the NEASC accreditation. Julie asked how many years are in the NEASC cycle. David replied 10. We will start again in 5 years to build up.

Julie Blanchard asked if maintenance and contracted services are broken down in the warehouse budget. The first line item just lists \$360,000 and she doesn't know what that includes. Robert Carroll replied electricity. The way we interpreted the question was by total. Does she want electricity costs by school? Julie said she is looking for more detail. John Elsesser said we are having an electricity bid on Wednesday. Robert said the rate may not be decided by the bid. John could reject it if the terms are not favorable.

Julie Blanchard asked about phone maintenance. We are learning about plans to implement VOIP - would that number then come out? John Elsesser replied no - there is a price for VOIP. Maintenance costs would be about the same. The difference is capital cost. Robert Carroll said if we were to do the

VOIP project we would not have enough money in the budget. We would be short \$3,000-\$4,000. Next year would be better. John noted that some of the phone systems we have now are 17 years old.

Andy Brodersen asked about additional funding pending and how it is reflected in the budget. David Petrone replied we use it to purchase items that are still needed if grants do not come through.

Matthew O'Brien asked about Question #20, which has to do with substantial changes in revenues. At this point there is nothing concrete. He knows that John Elsesser had a meeting – did it produce anything? John replied he had a meeting with Speaker Sharkey who said the MRSA money and Excess Cost would not be cut. The reality is they are going for another \$20 million in cuts this fiscal year. We are anticipating cuts to Casino and Transportation. The PILOT funds were already taken. Bond money is not formally on the table for this year - next year it might be. Matthew asked if they are changing the parameters for MRSA. John replied he was talking with the person who developed it – he said our legacy is that it would be there. It was in the Governor's budget. You are going to see cuts that were made this year will be carried forward to next year, and instead there will be this pot of MRSA money. They believe they are going to have a deficit mitigation vote later this month.

Richard Williams said when we talk about revenues, in the Special Ed programs you have, are some of the kids from out of town? David replied those students pay tuition. Andy Brodersen asked what happens if you send a student out, to say, VoAg. David replied we pay tuition. The VoAg number is in our budget. Mary Kortmann said some kids were out, but came back because our programs are stronger. Andy asked if it is to our advantage to have them come back. Jennifer Beausoleil replied yes because some of the other programs can be higher.

Andy Brodersen said the student population in general has dropped. At what point do we reach that the price drops? Jennifer Beausoleil replied when the State stops mandating services be provided. The SBAC initiative wasn't even just staff, it was also equipment. We had to have a certain number of machines that could run the test. It was a required test with no funding for equipment. Richard Williams said the population keeps going down yet cost continually rises. David Petrone replied the CAGE report from last year shows declining enrollment for every district. If you have a house with 5 kids you still have to buy electricity, etc. Situations are coming through our doors that are requiring services. The population is going down, but needs are going up. Cost to service kids these days is going up. Richard said he clearly sees what is going on in the State of CT budget process. Now we are starting to see the Governor saying that cuts will need to be made. When do we get to that point. David replied he doesn't think we have ever had a year when we were riding high on big budgets. Some years were 7-8%. He has been through years when big budget cuts were made and we have seen devastating results. Richard said he doesn't remember seeing a Dean of Students. David replied he probably hasn't seen kids reading at 50% of grade level in high school either. Kids need to leave our schools college ready. We believe in order to create that system that this is what is needed. If you feel differently, he respects that but disagrees. If you look back historically he doesn't think we have created outrageous budgets compared to surrounding towns. Richard said but if you look at the number of staff there are 292 employees. That is one employee for 5 children. David replied it doesn't work that way. That number includes custodians, cafeteria workers, etc. He hears what Richard is trying to say but he respectfully disagrees. The staff we have in place is by no means overboard. No staff members are walking around looking for things to do. The autism program has a one-to-one ratio but the alternative is outplacement at \$200,000 per student. You can't just take the number of staff and divide it by the number of kids. If you want to walk around the schools and see the programs, see the awards we are getting, there has been significant improvement from where we were 10 years ago. We were a good district. We are becoming a great district. We are trying hard to bring in money to save overall. Eugene Marchand noted that declining enrollment is nothing new but when you look at what we're spending compared to the rest of the state he thinks we're getting a bargain. William Oros

provided a handout showing how school responsibilities have evolved over years. We are not just educating students but bringing them up. We hired support staff because more and more services are being placed on the schools.

Matthew O'Brien asked what non-bargaining employees are. Robert Carroll replied positions such as the Director of Facilities, Director of Finance – that are not part of a union.

Julie Blanchard noted that health insurance is staying the same. Jennifer Beausoleil wanted to point out in all her years she has never seen that stay so low – there have been significant increases in some years. She gave kudos to John Elsesser, Beth Bauer and Robert Carroll for entering into the ECHIP program. It has saved taxpayers a lot of money.

Julie Blanchard noted that pension cost shows an increase. What is causing that? John Elsesser said it is the stock market overall. We are funding what the actuary told us to put in. We're not nearly back to where we started from, but there is an adjustment factor for all the AFSCME units – it is calculated every year. As far as he knows we are only ones who have that. As our costs go up or down the Union shares in the expense.

Matthew O'Brien asked Robert Carroll about the process for transfers. Robert replied the Board has a policy that when a line item is in the red it triggers the need for a transfer.

Thomas Pope asked about reimbursement for travel expenses for Board members to attend meetings. Jennifer Beausoleil said that is for us to attend the CABA conference. We have asked Robert to rename it Conference and Training. There is no mileage reimbursement. Hannah Pietrantonio noted that Coventry Board members were honored at the last CABA event.

Julie Blanchard said we had asked that you embed links in your online Board of Education agendas. David Petrone said they are there. If you go on the website there is a link to click – we have asked Kimberlee to change the terminology to “meetings and attachments.” Mary Kortmann noted there are some limitations - it is a website problem. David said when we switch over to the new website those issues will be addressed. Matthew O'Brien asked if this is new because he has not seen it. Jennifer Beausoleil replied no – it has been there since he asked for it. She outlined the navigation process to find the information. Matthew noted if they used the Town website it would work a lot easier. Julie said she can't attend every one of your meetings – she tries when she can. She tried to watch the video of the meeting of January 14th - it is 25 minutes long and the video ends before the meeting is over. David replied he had not heard there was a problem. We will check into it. Matthew said if the Board has any questions about the list of information we've requested to please call us. Julie thanked the Board of Education for attending the meeting.

4. Adjournment:

Motion #15/16-321: Matthew O'Brien moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:39 PM. The motion was seconded by Thomas Pope and carried on unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Stone
Town Council Clerk