

MINUTES OF THE TRI-BOARD WORKING GROUP

February 8, 2010

Town Hall Meeting Room B

Present: Al Alper, Karen Birck, Susan Bruschi, Richard Creeth and Jim Meinhold

Guests: Frank Scott, David Bohn, Lewis Andrews, Phil Gagliano, Bill Brennan, Sibylle Kinley, Chuck Wessendorf, Gil Bray, Gail Lavielle, Don Sauvigne, Joe Brenner, Hal Clark, Andy Pfortzheimer, Barbara Myers, Lynne Vanderslice, Warren Serenbetz and Bruce Likly

The meeting convened at 7:30 pm.

Minutes of the January 9, 2010 meeting were approved as written.

Susan Bruschi was elected (4-0, Bruschi abstaining) as permanent chair. Karen Birck volunteered to be secretary for this meeting.

Al Alper introduced Frank Scott, David Bohn, Lewis Andrews and Phil Gagliano from the Nonpartisan Action for a Better Redding group. Members of this group reported on the work they had done as a citizen's audit committee and the recommendations that they made for changes in Redding's town and school budgets to reduce taxes by 10% in 2010. Through a line-by-line evaluation of more than 2500 budget line items they concluded that several areas should continue without change. These include: support for the library, parks and recreation department, human services, commissions, boards and probate court, and maintaining current class sizes and teaching staff levels in core subjects.

Their major budget line item recommendations center on these strategies:

- Improving purchasing/procurement (e.g., insurance, fuels, sand and replacing equipment leases with purchases);
- Increasing weekly work hours from 32-35 to 40 hours where work hours are now less than 40;
- Finding more community volunteers to reduce staff costs (e.g., chaperones for school events);
- Increasing the sharing of administrative and support staff among town functions;
- Slight reductions of Town operations manpower and school teaching staffs, mostly in non-core subjects;
- Sharing operations and costs of the Communications Center with one or more nearby towns;

- Freezing for at least one year the cost of living increases of all employees, including teachers and other unionized staffs;
- Providing more competitively-priced medical benefits for non-union town employees;
- Replacing normal teacher attrition, estimated at seven for the coming year, with online instruction;
- Replacing face-to-face instruction of one language with online instruction;
- Eliminating “substitutes” for paraprofessionals in schools; and
- Changing police department staffing level and work hours.
- Replenishment of the Town’s “rainy day” fund at a manageable rate;
- Continued, aggressive exploration of the use of solar panels on our flat-roofed school buildings to use and sell electricity;
- Changes in health benefits and retiree benefits;
- The use of university interns in the schools;
- The posting of the Town’s check register, and other data, on-line;
- An examination of bookkeeping in some town operations, as well as the use by employees, and disposition, of Town-provided vehicles; and
- Improved handling of tax-related law suits against the Town.

At the conclusion of the presentation, they responded to questions from Tri-Board members and those in the audience.

Wilton resident Joe Brenner then shared his theory of how the Board of Education should approach downsizing its operations in light of declining enrollment and responded to questions.

The next meeting of the Tri-Board was set for March 4th at 7:30 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 pm.

Karen A. Birck, Acting Secretary