

FTS Advisory Board

January 16th 7:00 – 9:00PM

St. Matthew's Church

**Purpose: Bring different perspectives together.
Begin to formulate important improvements to our budget process.**

We are all here because we care about the future of our community.

1. Balance the energy in the room
2. Develop our agreements
3. Activate your prior experience
4. Compare our community
5. Formulate important improvements to our budget process
6. Appraise the night

1 Balance the energy in the room

FTS members play supporting roles this evening, not drive the conversation. Choose one of the following to role play this evening. You must play your role as a likeable person and follow the ground rules. Any time you come out of character, please hold your card high in the air, otherwise, you are ...

(a respectful pseudonym), A tuned out voter with ... (no children, children not yet in school, age ____)
_____, A senior, just getting by on fixed pension, much lower than peers who worked in public sector
_____, An elected official who ran on zero increase to the budget
_____, A parent with child involved in several sports. Doesn't vote
_____, An avid anti-increase Patch commenter

_____, A teacher
_____, A high school student

2 Develop our agreements

Hard on ideas, soft on people.	Assume good intention
Understand first. Confirm.	Share the air
Speak your mind	"Pass" - at any time
"ELMO" – consensus to move on	"Ouch" – for you or someone else
??	??



3 Activate your experience with the budget process

Think back to the three budget referendums, May 2011. Recall your experience leading up to it, directly, or what you read, saw or heard. Recall a highlight of the process. Also recall an aspect that didn't serve you or your community very well. Share your thoughts with a partner.

We'll hear a sampling of your answers.

4 Compare our community

Take a few minutes to read "Creating Schools That Learn" and circle what you find useful. With paired pairs compare your experiences with Joan's community. What are some of our biggest challenges to acting together? Again, we'll hear a sampling of your answers.

Creating schools that learn

Joan has been teaching first grade for twenty-five years. She is known in her small district as a dedicated and effective educator. One day a neighbor pulls her aside to ask about the school. "I just don't think teachers are very motivated," says the neighbor. I've tried to meet with them to find ways to help my kids be more enthusiastic about school, but the meetings never seem to go anywhere. Some of them act like they are in foxholes, afraid to come out; some of them seem to think our girls' problems are our fault, and they have no responsibility to help us fix them. And I don't know what to do next."

Years before, Joan's own children had had similar problems in high school. I don't think it's the teachers," she says. She tells her neighbor about a project she had initiated several years back with two other teachers, to redesign the math curriculum. Merely by telling the story, Joan relives some of the excitement she had felt. Her eyes light up, her hands play a lively duet in the air as she talks. She tells her neighbor that the principal was very supportive and had a few ideas of his own. Then he said they needed to get permission from the superintendent.

Joan's shoulders suddenly slump and her eyes grow opaque. "All the superintendent could talk about," she says, "were the reasons it could not be done. He said he'd been through it all before. First, the state wouldn't allow it. The school board wouldn't approve. And the parents would protest. Sure he cared about the education of the children in the district. But all he could focus on were the 'why not's.' And without his support, our plan was dead." Neither Joan nor her partners have ever tried to innovate anything beyond their classroom doors since then.

Joan and the superintendent have never talked directly about this. And the superintendent has long forgotten conversation; he's had so many like it. He genuinely wants the district to improve, and he recognizes that it must change. But he sees himself as continually struggling with the worst tendencies of his partners. The state regulators can be inflexible; the school board tends to micromanage; some parents are intransigent, the teacher's union leaders are often suspicious, and the union itself has voted down innovative measures in the past. In his mind, his job represents a continual battle on many different fronts, with himself as the only person who sees the needs of the district as a whole. Sometimes he wishes he would get more support, but he never expects it and never asks for it, because there's no reason in his mind to think that anyone would give it to him.

The school board members, meanwhile, feel a great deal of pressure from the community; they perceive the people of the area as unwilling to spend any more in taxes for their schools. The union leaders, the principals, the staff, the local community members, the teachers at all levels, and the students themselves all have their own story to tell. Their perspectives couldn't be more different, but they all have two things in common. First, they all have the same goal: a school system that works more effectively and more compassionately, a system that doesn't let students like Joan's neighbor's daughters slip through the cracks this way. Second, they all feel utterly alone. Even when they compare notes, as Joan and her neighbor did, they do not imagine acting together.

5 Formulate important improvements

Using the situation assessment below and budget information provided, begin formulating necessary improvements to our budget process. List the following:

- Decisions: agreement, not yet specific
- Recommended actions (who do what by when)
- Issues: important areas with lack of agreement
- Parking lot: ELMO'd items that should not be lost

We will review your lists with the entire group.

Situation Assessment

Bill Guzman (Superintendent) presented last week a 6% increase to BOE, mostly to cover fixed expenses. Steve Werbner (Town Manager) has gone on record as saying a budget right for town is in range of 1-3%. Steve adds that there have been striking differences between what he and Bill believes is right for the town each year, and this year is no exception. He says, "If we continue to do the same things we've done every year, we'll continue to get the same result we get every year."

Town Council Chairman Jack Scavone has said that Tolland is facing a \$2,000,000 cost increase just to hold the line on current service levels. Jack has stated that this is expected to be even worse in the budget cycle after this one. Steve Werbner adds that Tolland's Grand List increase is far lower than anticipated cost increases, averaging \$400,000 over the past several years. In addition, State funding has been flat and may decrease this year. Our challenges do not begin nor end in 2012. In each recent year we have squeezed from both ends. School programming has been significantly cut while budget increases have outpaced Grand List growth. Discussion among residents often falls short of meaningful dialogue. Rather, budget complexities and town needs are sometimes reduced to two sides, hold costs versus maintain services. Town Manager Steve Werbner tells us, "If we continue to do the same things we've done every year, we'll continue to get the same result we get every year."

6 Appraise the night

Mingle and collect from as many people as you can the answer to at least one of the following:

- What got answered for you tonight?
- What is still on your mind?

We'll hear a sample of

- What did you hear that what really resonated with you?
- What did you hear that really needs to happen?

Select Documents

Budget \$ and Voter Counts

Amounts rounded to thousands	Budget		Proposed					Proposed
	Actual 2009-10	2010-2011	Actual 2010-11	2011-2012	3-May	17-May	31-May	
MONEY								
Total Budget			49,320.2	51,920.0	51,040.0	50,752.7	50,427.7	
.... Vs. ly actual				5.27%	3.49%	2.90%	2.25%	5.98%
School budget	31,832.9	33,808.5	32,197.3	36,016.1	35,136.1	34,906.1	34,662.4	36,736.2
... vs. LY actual			0.0	3,818.8	2,938.8	2,708.8	2,465.0	
... vs. LY budget		0.0	(1,611.2)	2,207.6	1,327.6	1,097.6	853.8	2,073.8
... vs. proposed				0.0	(880.0)	(1,110.0)	(1,353.8)	
... vs. prior						(230.0)	(243.8)	
VOTER COUNTS								
Yes					1,500	1,601	1,759	
No					1,867	1,637	1,513	
Total					3,367	3,238	3,272	
Difference					(367)	(36)	246	
% Voting					36.7%	35.3%	35.7%	
Registered voters					9,176	9,176	9,176	
Didn't vote					5,809	5,938	5,904	

2012-13 Sensitivity

Amounts rounded to thousands	Proposed 2012-13		What if, sensitivity analysis				
	5.98%	0.00%	1.00%	2.00%	3.00%	4.00%	5.00%
.... Vs. ly actual	5.98%	0.00%	1.00%	2.00%	3.00%	4.00%	5.00%
School budget	36,736.2	34,662.4	35,009.0	35,355.6	35,702.2	36,048.9	36,395.5
... vs. LY budget	2,073.8	0.0	346.6	693.2	1,039.9	1,386.5	1,733.1
... vs. proposed		(2,073.8)	(1,727.2)	(1,380.6)	(1,034.0)	(687.3)	(340.7)

School Budget History - Chart

All amounts (\$,000's)									
FYE	Super	BOE	Passed	Super incr	Town incr	Diff	Super incr	Town incr	Diff
2003			24,660						
2004	27,048	26,763	26,463	2,388	1,803	(585)	9.7%	7.3%	-2.4%
2005	29,344	29,344	27,761	2,881	1,298	(1,583)	10.9%	4.9%	-6.0%
2006	29,693	29,420	28,781	1,932	1,020	(912)	7.0%	3.7%	-3.3%
2007	31,650	31,083	30,428	2,869	1,647	(1,222)	10.0%	5.7%	-4.2%
2008	33,434	33,090	31,591	3,006	1,163	(1,843)	9.9%	3.8%	-6.1%
2009	34,418	34,418	33,474	2,827	1,883	(944)	8.9%	6.0%	-3.0%
2010	35,084	34,608	33,474	1,610	-	(1,610)	4.8%	0.0%	-4.8%
2011	35,466	35,636	33,809	1,992	335	(1,657)	6.0%	1.0%	-5.0%
2012	36,016	36,016	34,662	2,207	853	(1,354)	6.5%	2.5%	-4.0%
2013	36,736			2,074					
average						(1,301)	8.2%	3.9%	-4.3%
Max						(585)			
Min						(1,843)			
Range						(1,258)			