

CONNECTICUT TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM BOARD

**Minutes of the January 17, 2017 Meeting of the of the
Sub Committee on Outreach and Finance**

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of State, the Connecticut Technical High School System Board Committee on Outreach and Finance met on January 17, 2017 at 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT.

I. Call to Order

Mr. Trefry called the meeting to order at 12:00PM

Present: John Barrasso Chairperson of the Outreach and Finance Committee
Gina Chiarella, Committee Member
Chris DiPentima, Committee Member
Patricia Keavney, Vice-Chairperson of the CTHSS Board
Commissioner Catherine Smith, Committee Member
Nivea L. Torres, Superintendent of the CTHSS
Robert Trefry, Chairperson of the CTHSS Board
James Chasse, CTHSS Education Consultant
Sandi Casberg, CTHSS Education Consultant
Patricia Feeney, Ella T. Grasso THS Principal
Mark Ambruso, Windham THS Principal

Absent: Commissioner Scott Jackson
Mr. Fitz Walker

II. Public Participation

There was no public participation

III. Minutes of the December 13, 2016 Meeting of the Outreach and Finance.

Mr. Trefry moved, Ms. Keavney seconded, that the Committee approve the minutes of the December 13, 2016 meeting of the Outreach and Finance.

Vote:	In Favor:	Barrasso, Chiarella, DiPentima, Keavney, Smith, Trefry
	Opposed:	0
	Abstained:	0
	Absent:	DiPentima, Jackson, Walker

Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Strategic Planning for the Connecticut Technical High School System

A. Budget Update

Superintendent Torres introduced Mr. Chasse who provided an update on latest information impacting the district's operating budget for fiscal year 2016-17. The district continues to pursue the refill of critical instructional and operational positions.

Mr. Chasse provided a breakdown of the current vacant positions. The latest projections assume that 36 full-time positions approved for refill by the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) will be filled by January 20, 2017. The

projections also assume an additional 50 full-time time general fund positions (including two durationals) currently awaiting approval to post will be filled by February 3, 2017.

The fiscal year 2016-17 revised budget is \$158,466,509. There is currently a \$500,000 reserve for emergency building repairs in the event that additional bonding is not approved before June 30, 2017 to ensure funding is available in the event of unforeseen winter weather costs due to maintenance vacancies. The projected surplus is subject to change as a result of ongoing collective bargaining negotiations between the State Employee Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC) and the State of Connecticut. Further rescission actions that might be taken during the 2016-17 fiscal year will greatly impact strategic planning efforts and require further programmatic reductions.

The district continues to experience an increase in overtime costs primarily driven by the delay in refilling maintenance positions. While savings in the full-time payroll line item is being achieved, overtime costs as a stand-alone budget line item are increasing. While progress was made in reducing the number of maintenance vacancies in fiscal year 2015-16, several retirements and separations from state service during the current fiscal year have resulted in further increases in the vacancy count. It is very unlikely that the desired goal of a ten percent reduction (10%) in overtime costs for fiscal year 2016-17 will be achieved as a result of the increase in the maintenance vacancy count and continued delays in the timely refill of these positions. Dr. Torres continues to advocate for the timely refill of these positions.

The Governor is expected to release his Recommended State Operating and Capital Budgets for Fiscal Years 2017-18 and 2018-19 in early February, next month's report should include some highlights of his recommendations.

The district continues to pursue two critical bond allocations. A request for \$2,575,000 for various infrastructure repairs was submitted to the Department of Administrative Services - Construction Services for forwarding to the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) in October 2016 and awaits State Bond Commission consideration. An additional request for \$2,500,000 for classroom and networking technology equipment was submitted to the State Department of Education for forwarding to OPM.

Superintendent Torres noted that the CTHSS continues to be fiscally responsible especially with the two established reserves--one for building emergency repairs and one for the advanced degree stipend. The Superintendent also shared that she has been having conversations with the Deputy Secretary of OPM regarding positions and overtime analysis and brought to OPM's attention the significant impact to the CTHSS operating budget and overtime goal as a result of not filling those maintenance positions. OPM continues to work with the CTHSS regarding the refill of these positions.

The Committee acknowledged that the OT goal could not be achieved without the immediate refill of critical maintenance positions.

A copy of the Budget report is included in the official file of this meeting.

B. Aviation Tuition Rate

The Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) currently operates two (2) aviation maintenance technician programs. The Stratford School for Aviation Maintenance Technicians is located on the grounds of Sikorsky Memorial Airport in Stratford, CT and serves approximately 50 adult students. The Connecticut Aero Tech School is located on the grounds of Brainard Airport in Hartford, CT and also serves approximately 50 adult students.

Superintendent Torres introduced Mr. James Chasse, Education Consultant to the Committee members. In August, 2016, the CTHSS Board approved a tuition increase to approximately \$26,000 for the new cohort that is scheduled to start in March 2017 for the two aviation programs. Due to the off cycle of two major employers and the tuition increase, there is only interest from one to two students from each of the programs; therefore it is requested the Committee consider a continuation of the current tuition rate of \$6576 for the new cohort scheduled to begin in March 2017. On February 8, 2017, the Governor's proposed capital budgets for the next two years will be released at which time the Board members will be updated on what effect this will have and what program adjustments will be needed.

Mr. Barrasso reminded the Committee members that DOL Commissioner Jackson has received a federal grant in excess of \$1 Million to potentially offset a portion of the tuition costs of the aviation program. Details are being finalized with the companies who will be taking part in receiving the grant funding.

A question was raised as to why not make a slight raise in the tuition. Superintendent Torres indicated that she has met with both SDE and OPM regarding the delay of the tuition increase. She is cautious about moving forward as the CTHSS needs time to have conversations with the community sectors who need to be aware of this in order to have a positive effect. Mr. Trefry reminded the Committee members that the Board approved the submission of a legislative proposal to the General Assembly to authorize the aviation program at two sites as a postsecondary program and approval is pending. This would solidify a relationship with the US Department of Education and allow students financial aid in the form of a Pell Grant. Superintendent Torres also noted that current operating budget for this fiscal year can continue to support the program. Mr. Chasse was asked to clarify what impact the release of the Governor's budget may have on the program.

A motion was called at this time.

Mr. Trefry moved, Ms. Keavney seconded, that the committee recommend to the CTHSS Board, approval of the continuation of the current tuition rate of \$6,576 payable over three installments for the Aviation Maintenance Technician Program effective for the new cohort scheduled to begin in March 2017.

Vote: In Favor:	Barrasso, Chiarella, Keavney, Smith, Trefry
Opposed:	0
Abstained:	0
Absent:	DiPentima, Jackson, Walker

Motion carried unanimously.

A copy of the report entitled "Continuation of Current Tuition Rate for the Aviation Maintenance Technician Program" is included in the official file of this meeting.

C. Update on Outreach Efforts

Mr. Barrasso opened the discussion by sharing with the Committee members that he has been hearing good things from the public sector about the CTHSS. This includes feedback on the commercials, social media presence, newspaper ads, etc. He indicated that the district was known as "the best kept secret" and now that has shifted. Mr. Barrasso commended the Superintendent on all of her efforts in re-branding each school within the CTHSS as part of the strategic plan charge, as there were many sectors that had not heard of the system prior to these efforts. Ms. Keavney agreed that marketing is a very important expenditure for the CTHSS in order to compete with other schools including the magnet and charter schools.

Superintendent Torres announced that the CTHSS is in its third year of the Strategic Action Plan. Superintendent Torres introduced CTHSS Education Consultant Ms. Sandi Casberg, Mr. Mark Ambruso, Principal of Windham Technical High School and Ms. Patricia Feeney, Principal of Ella T. Grasso Technical High School. Superintendent Torres reminded the Committee members that everything the CTHSS does is directly aligned with the Strategic Action Plan Goals, the mission, and the charge the CTHSS Board has given the Home Office Team.

Superintendent Torres spoke specifically to Goal Number Three of the CTHSS Strategic Action Plan (Flexibility, Responsiveness and Innovation) Transform the CTHSS with innovative program designs that are responsive to Connecticut's workforce needs, thus positioning the system as a leading force in career technical education. The Framework for Success 3.1 and 3.2 is to position the CTHSS as a leading force in career technical education (3.1) and present the CTHSS as the pipeline for workforce development in the state (3.2). She also referenced Goal 1.1: Partner with business and industry for all career pathways and expand partnerships to provide educational production work, work-based learning, and job shadowing.

Superintendent Torres added that positioning the CTHSS has not only been at the state level but also at the national level. When the CTHSS started the implementation of the plan three years ago, the district was not recognized as a leading force in career and technical education at the state and at the national level.

Superintendent Torres also shared some of the outreach challenges over the last three year. There is still a dated perception about the CTHSS. The CTHSS has tried to create a visual identity and a new brand. Another challenge she shared is the individual regional needs of the district specifically when trying to market and re-brand especially when a marketing campaign is created specific to a school. These campaigns cannot be recycled and used for another school due to different regional needs, thus adding more costs. The last challenge Superintendent shared with the Committee were the fiscal challenges. Three years ago when the CTHSS started investing in Outreach efforts, funds that were allocated have now since been scaled back because of budget concerns. For the future, the CTHSS will need to strategize on how to invest and create a cohesive branding strategy that includes broadcast television, cable TV, radio, direct mail, social media, and public relations efforts. Currently, the CTHSS does not have staff who directly oversee communications and public relations. This becomes an added expenditure for outreach efforts.

Superintendent Torres shared samples of current and past outreach efforts including: visual representations, the strategic action plan, posters of the cohesive message, the career clusters poster depicting the alignment with national CTE standards and changing terminology, and posters of geography creating marketing, branding and advertising for each school in 20 locations throughout the state identifying what the differentiators are for each school. The CTHSS Student profile poster was also shared as an example. The student profile provides specific metrics to measure what success means for the students in the areas of work, job, college and career. Lastly, the Superintendent shared the list of partners and spoke specifically to Electric Boat. The CTHSS would not have been able to establish a direct relationship with Electric Boat and other regional partners without the outreach efforts that were undertaken.

A suggestion was made by Commissioner Smith to update Sikorsky's logo on the brochure and to incorporate more tech type companies into CTHSS partnerships and ramp up these marketing efforts. Companies need data analytics, computer science coders, webmasters, to name a few. Commissioner Smith has a survey underway regarding this need. It was noted that Platt Tech's IST program has shifted in this direction.

Chairman Trefry felt it very important to note that when the CTHSS Board was developing the strategic plan, national organizations who were doing work in research were brought in to speak to the board and while going through the process, no one had heard that the CTHSS existed. He commended the Superintendent on doing a tremendous job in increasing the national profile. The Board members concurred with Chairman Trefry's commendation.

Ms. Casberg provided an update to the Committee members on the marketing and recruitment efforts at the district level. Her presentation included: examples of the roles of the CTHSS partners including student workforce, work-based learning and examples of the marketing publications. She walked the Committee members through the series of career posters of CTHSS Alumni graduates. In an effort to brand consistency and individuality, the district created new Professional School Logos, rebranded all 20 school websites to be appealing to the younger generation, marketed in the form of Facebook, social media boot camps, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, e-newsletter, etc. at the district and school level.

Ms. Feeney presented to the Committee members Grasso Tech's overall marketing and recruitment efforts at the local level. The first step was to target parents and in doing so Grasso Tech developed a "Take a Closer Look" campaign that went out to families via a direct mailing, billboards, bus stops, and the mall advertising in all different neighborhoods. Additionally, posters lawn signs, and window clings for business/store displays, were made with regards to production. Grasso Tech received positive feedback from the community on this campaign. Grasso Tech has also promoted events, open houses via radio and has purchased several advertising give-a-ways. Ms. Feeney also spoke about Grasso Tech's industry partner relationships which have been strengthened with Electric Boat. Electric Boat uses Grasso Tech as a career center for their welding program during the evening. Electric Boat has been a part of Parent Open Houses and also employs many of Grasso Tech's students. Grasso Tech is planning to have a community open house in the future.

The Committee members commended Ms. Feeney on Grasso Tech's partnership with Electric Boat.

Mr. Ambruso presented to the Committee members Windham Tech's overall marketing and recruitment efforts at the local level. Windham Tech is not scheduled for a new renovation project. This presents a challenge for the school as the facility must be welcoming and attractive to prospective students. The first step was to overhaul the school's building signage to make it more friendly and vibrant. This year, Windham Tech completely renovated its gym. Windham Tech has one of the most active YouTube pages in the district and also has a presence on social media the radio, and advertising. Windham Tech hosted their first community open house this year in order to bridge relationships and connections with the local community. Windham Tech has also worked with Direct mail, posters, and on-line banners via Facebook to create awareness. Mr. Ambruso also noted that Windham Tech has a large number of students on work based learning in which Windham's community is greatly benefiting by.

In closing Superintendent Torres shared next steps. A go- to marketing strategy needs to be created to speak to the tuition increase for the schools of aviation. To date, the CTHSS has not focused efforts on the schools of aviation. The CTHSS has focused on the 9-12 programs and creating a recognition for these.

The second step is to focus on J.M. Wright. Superintendent Torres shared constructive criticism from a state representative who recently called her regarding outreach efforts. Some of the feedback was that JM Wright has gone quiet and that the public is not aware the school has a restaurant and offers other programs.

The third step Superintendent Torres shared is self-reflection. Internally, the CTHSS must reflect on accomplishments over the past three years, how much the CTHSS has invested, and what the system can learn from others competitors. Superintendent Torres shared that over the past three years, the CTHSS has had a retainer with a marketing partner and during the 2014-15 school year the CTHSS invested approximately \$2.5 million dollars which included launching websites for 20 schools, a complete overhaul of marketing strategies, signage, and advertising, During the 2015-16 school year, over 1 million was expended on marketing, and for 2016-17 so far the CTHSS has expended approximately \$200,000.

In closing, the Superintendent shared that there needs to be a position at the CTHSS and someone who is directly responsible for communications and outreach. This could assist in reallocating some of the funds the CTHSS is investing in outreach. Superintendent Torres played a manufacturing TV spot video in order to give the Committee a sense of the new marketing efforts.

Chairman Trefry requested that the minutes of this meeting reflect that the committee agrees that the funding expended on the CTHSS marketing campaign has been money well spent on the investment. Marketing efforts are greatly needed and the Board is seeing the results of the campaign. Superintendent Torres was commended on her efforts.

Superintendent Torres thanked the Committee members for their support and also thanked her staff for their thoughtful presentations.

V. The next meeting of the Committee on Outreach and Finance will be held on February 28, 2017.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15.

Prepared by: *Diane Curtis*
Diane Curtis, Administrative Assistant