

Correspondence for 4/28 Meeting:

From: Goldie Liverant <goldieliverant@att.net>
Sent: Sunday, April 26, 2020 8:52 PM
To: Robert Tarlov
Cc: mbylone@gmail.com
Subject: Budgets

Hi Rob.

Apparently we both take pride in our community and have served on a variety of boards and commissions. I think you and I were on the sewer and water commission about 30 years ago. You have served diligently on the Board of Finance for many years and presently as chairman. Not an easy task.

I am sorry that I was not able to attend the virtual budget hearings and workshops of the Bd..of Education and the Bd. of Selectmen. However I did have the opportunity to review the budgets that were presented. I believe both Boards were fiscally responsible in preparing the budgets.They considered the NEEDS and not the wants of the community.

Having been an elementary school teacher for 30 years I recognize and understand the NEEDS of a school system. Adequate staffing and services is of utmost Importance. With the increased use of developing technology, even at the primary level, it is important to keep up. Obviously there is an added expense. Colchester has earned the reputation of having an excellent school system. We don't want to lose that recognition.

I served on the Bd. of Selectmen from 1991-1999.. Many changes have taken place since then. The Town has grown tremendously. With the growth the NEEDS increase. We are not a bedroom community. We need to be a community with vitality and energy. More businesses and more activities. We must support our firefighters and EMT responders and our police. Recreational activities for children and adults is essential.

With an aging population we must provide for our Seniors. Much of this had to be included in the proposed budget

I know that these are very difficult times financially and emotionally but somehow we must maintain the education, the health, the safety,the welfare and the integrity of our children,youth, families and seniors.

You know as well as I that there is always a group of voters who are extremely vocal and assertive when it comes to the budget. No matter what budget is presented. They want to cut and eliminate, cut more and eliminate more. That is not how the process should work.

Ron. I am asking you and the members of the Bd. Of Finance to please consider the NEEDS of the townspeople and to support the Bd. Of Ed. Budget and the Selectman's budget..

Thank you for your consideration.

Goldie Liverant
Concerned Citizen and Taxpayer

From: Cari Fortin <sweetcaroline0816@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 26, 2020 2:30 PM
To: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Cc: Amber Albee <aalbee@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: What Youth Services means to us:)

To whom it may concern;

My name is Cari Fortin, and I am the mother of an 8th grade student enrolled at WJJMS. If I may; I would like to take a moment and put my thoughts down as to why Colchester Youth Services is so important to my son; and to me.

Dominic started going to the youth center the first week it was available to him in the 6th grade. Each summer since he has enjoyed many of the field trips; and already told me that would be the focus of this summers plans. He has done a few of the other programs as well; including Wireless Wanderers and last years Last Day of School Party and an outdoor movie night. He truly enjoys his time there; he love going after school whether it's a week he knows some of his friends are going, or if it's a week most of his usual crew will be absent due to other obligations. Teenagers and pre teens are social creatures, who like to know what's going to happen and who is going to be around - I love that Dominic is excited about going to the youth center no matter what - because it really is a space to him of acceptance and comfort and security and enjoyment. When I asked him what he enjoyed about the youth center and it's various programs he said:

"It's a safe place that allows everyone to be themselves, a place to make new friends and hang out with your current ones.... and everyone is nice and caring. If the services were not available I would miss all the people that work there, and having a place to safely hang out with my friends."

When a child starts middle school - a lot of parents struggle with the level of independence that should be "Assigned" to each child. Honestly - 6th grade is a whole new beast. The last time the walked out of school in the 5th grade - the bus made sure they had them, or a day care was waiting for them to show up, or we had to get tickets and passes and show ID's to pick up our own kids out of the school. 6th grade - over the course of that summer where a lot of kids don't actually change all that much - is a whole different ball game. Sure; there are some checks and balances - but as a parent you realize its totally different. Kids can walk out of school and just...go. We recognize if something happens to our child - there is a good chance we aren't going to find out as quickly as we would have just a couple months prior. The Youth Center and YServices offered some fantastic opportunities for the kids to learn how to navigate these things on their own.... "controlled freedom".... time on their own, but with some loose guidelines of accountability. Take the field trips - we check them in, we pick them up. Over the course of the day they are out on an adventure - using the buddy system or what not. They check in at lunch time, or other spots during the day - an also get time to explore on their own. As a parent it serves ALL the needs..... my child is learning how to care for themselves... but we know someone is making sure it is going well. The summer between 5th and 6th grade, it's not that the training wheels come off - its more that the world thinks the kids that were riding a big wheel are now ready for a Harley - but these programs provide a great transition between the two. A much bigger bike, instructions on how to use it and ride it well - but someone is still making sure you show up at the finish line.

Dominic has gone on summer trips where he was the only one of his "crew" that went.... and there have been a couple that he didn't know anyone from the get go. He has still enjoyed each of this trips; as much as any other. I remember one where he told me the highlight of the trip was that he had lunch with just Kylie and Hannah - and while the rest of the day was great.... lunchtime was the best. It takes a special person to work with middle schoolers, to make them feel loved, and ok and understood.... and each and everyone on the staff has always knocked that right out of the park.

I know the world is crazy right now - and I understand the focus is on the greater good and how do we keep as much of a sense of normalcy as possible. Youth Services, in its full capacity - it going to be a huge help in transitioning our kids back to whatever the new normal is in the outside world. Kids are isolated, and struggling, and nervous right now.... they have no control over any of it - and are struggling to keep up and understand. Kids are going to need a safe space; of their own; to get some joy and get reacclimated to the new world. As a parent - I know Youth Services will do just that... be there for my son, and all the other kids who use their services.. to get them back to the good.

Thank you for allowing me this time. Please feel free to reach out if I can give more, clarify anything, or sing some more praises.

I hope you and all yours are staying safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Cari Fortin - Dominic's mom

From: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Sent: Sunday, April 26, 2020 5:17 AM
To: jmcnair3@comcast.net <jmcnair3@comcast.net>
Subject: Re: a suggestion to educate the voters

Thanks James, we'll get there.

I have stated at budget meetings that we would be having a separate meeting on revenue. Maggie was asked at one of the meetings when she would have updated information for us. That meeting will likely be next week.

As Maggie responded, we are having department heads recalculate their related revenue items (ambulance, building fees, Norwich tuition, etc.). Also, waiting for the State to confirm their previously declared aid amounts and; as new federal aid programs announced, we're waiting for State to tell us our share.

There was an article in CT Mirror last week that said under one of the programs we were getting 212K in education aid, but as of Friday that was the only source for that info.

Rob

Rob Tarlov, Chairman, Board of Finance
860-608-4293

From: jmcnair3@comcast.net <jmcnair3@comcast.net>
Sent: Saturday, April 25, 2020 7:21 AM
To: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Cc: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: a suggestion to educate the voters

Rob,

In my passing conversations, I'm troubled to hear how many people confuse zero spending with zero tax increase. I have to remind them their mill rate is dependent on more than spending. There are other variables that might change versus this year. It would be helpful to provide at workshop meetings the following report updated in the areas marked hopefully by May 10th. I get the uncertainty of the revenues. Yet, in the past we made a best guess to let voter know.

If not , then at least tell people not to equate zero spending with zero tax increase.

Be well,

James McNair

From: John Malsbenden <malsbendenjohn336@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 24, 2020 1:57 PM
To: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: B of E budget

Rob,

I have heard some talk to the effect that there is some feeling that there should be some modification to the contract between the BOE the teachers' union to the effect the teachers should not receive any increments. For the records. I am totally opposed to this approach to budget balancing. The town and BOE budgets should not be balanced on the backs of employees..

The teachers of Colchester have - over the years - made more concessions to the town than any other educational or municipal union in the State of Connecticut bar none. The town should not keep trying to go back to that well.

As a senior citizen, I have the same problems as other seniors. I also believe that the town (and its seniors) are and will continue to be well served by a top notch school system.

John F. Malsbenden

From: jmcnair3@comcast.net <jmcnair3@comcast.net>
Sent: Sunday, April 26, 2020 3:46 PM
To: First Selectman Bylone <mbylone@colchesterct.org>
Cc: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: Mary, people speaking up

Mary,

Your points about people's silence do have merit. Yet, let me share this with you. As long as I have lived here, people that push back on spending and tax increases are painted as the bad guys. They are anti-progress. They are anti-education. They are anti- kids. I've seen mothers arguing vehemently in the Town Hall parking lot after a budget was defeated. A current BoF Member a couple of years ago confronted a citizen at Town hall and screamed at him. He thought the person in question tampered with some lane signs. I've seen and heard threatening language at public meetings against those questioning the budget. Budget season has hot blooded people on both sides.

So, I keep hearing fears to being attacked on social media, or physically. I've heard fears the Town would use the Assessor's office to punish people. I've heard people say they fear for their kids in the school system. I've heard people say they have business in town. The fear is not rational but it does exist. Also, many people do not like confrontation. They are not like us with thick skin and wearing our big boy/girl pants.

Lastly, I lost a dear friend because she was told to choose between her friendship with me and her political career after I got shunned by the DTC. There are some guardians of the status quo that can be nasty.

It's easier for many to just wait until the vote the voice their opinion anonymously.

Just my two cents,

James

From: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>
Sent: Sunday, April 26, 2020 11:46 AM
To: jmcnair3@comcast.net <jmcnair3@comcast.net>; First Selectman Bylone <mbylone@colchesterct.org>
Cc: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: Re: budget approval dates

Hi James

As I understand it, the calling out of "30 days" applied to those charters where there is a timeline stated. You are right that we do not have dates in our charter. The attorneys, and not just ours, are interpreting the July 1 date in the statement that has to do with a town having a budget for July 1, 2020. I don't have the language in front of me, vbut that is the part they are referring to.

The second thing to consider, and this is just a Mary Bylone thing...We are projected to have a return of COVID in the fall. This will bring additional demands on our town government to divert attention to handling this. I feel as the person who is the position of First Selectman, which charges me with the operations of running the town, that I need a budget to be able to get moving with getting the town back and on its feet. Dragging on the unknown, having the possibility of not knowing what will be approved, etc, seems like a plan filled with additional challenges. Here is something to consider....given everything that is going on and the accusations that everyone is appalled at the process and how no one wants an increase (I don't make up these statements, they come from the mouths of just a few) WHY, WHY, WHY???? aren't there more people engaged in these meetings? Writing me letters? Calling Town Hall? The people screaming this year are screaming the same message they have screamed in years past...they are in fact, the same people. I would love for a referendum tomorrow. I need to get on with healing the town and getting us focused on smart growth so Colchester will be here in years to come. I have offered up reductions in spending I don't believe in, but keep getting asked to provide to get to a zero spend. Just some random thoughts as I try to plan my week ahead.

Mary Bylone

First Selectman, Colchester

127 Norwich Avenue

Colchester, CT 06415

860-537-7220 office

860-861-2727 cell

From: jmcnair3@comcast.net <jmcnair3@comcast.net>
Sent: Sunday, April 26, 2020 9:34 AM
To: First Selectman Bylone <mbylone@colchesterct.org>
Cc: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: budget approval dates

Mary,

Just wanted to add this history to my position statement. 7 out of the last 17 years we approved budgets after June 15th. 6 out of the last 17 years we passed a budget before May 15th. Though no deadlines are imposed by our Charter, one could argue a 30 day extension from traditional dates would be mid-July not mid June. I find it hard to believe the Governor intended to impose an arbitrary deadline without knowing our history.

From: jmcnair3@comcast.net <jmcnair3@comcast.net>
Sent: Sunday, April 26, 2020 7:59 AM
To: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: My positions

Rob and Mary,

Mary was kind enough to make the time to pen a letter to me about her positions. [I am sorry to digress but a paper document with an ink signature for this time period is rare and special to me.]

So I'd like to state mine.

I cannot imagine what either of you are going through. The EOs in my opinion are sloppily written forcing you two to figure it all out as you go along. So who am I to ever question your intent or judge you? If you feel my posts are personal in nature let me know and I'll offer immediate retraction.

I can understand not jeopardizing the general public to have a referendum. I can also understand the need to approve a budget within a reasonable time if the health risk extends into Fall. I don't understand how 7c-5 forbids extending the referendum. Again, in my opinion, the EO is poorly written. Reading the EO over and over I guess I am missing something. The EO addresses extending municipal deadlines for the submission of the budget materials and public hearings. Our Charter has no deadlines. There is no deadline when to start. It's purely at the discretion of the Boards. Like this year, Boards waited as long as possible to get decent Hartford numbers. There are no deadlines for when first referendum must happen. There are no deadlines when a referendum must pass. May 15th has no meaning to Colchester to extend from. So, I am truly baffled why the legal opinion didn't address if the EO applied to us at all about the referendum. His best expressed logic is a budget must be adopted by June 15th SO TAX BILLS CAN BE MAILED. That language is NOWHERE in the EO. In my opinion, the

optics of the voter losing their vote so Town Hall doesn't have to do extra work is not good. Again, it happened before and Town Hall survived.

We are in unprecedented waters. Yet, in the past the BoF took a belief that no services would be cut without the voter having a say first. If left up to the BoF, I will strongly lobby for the same logic to be applied to spending increases. No Vote, No increase.

Lastly, I hope this year touches the thousands and thousands of registered voters that don't vote in Referendums on a regular basis. Their vote should never be taken for granted.

Thanks for your time,

Be well,

James

From: James McNair <jmcnair3@comcast.net>
Sent: Saturday, April 25, 2020 5:46 PM
To: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Subject:

Fyi in case you did not get a copy. I'm sharing since your name was included. Also, her comment about who was BMA you might find of interest.

Be well,

James