

CORRESPONDENCE – BOF Meeting – 4/28

From: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>
Sent: Monday, April 26, 2021 10:22 AM
To: Colchester Town Budget <townbudget@colchesterct.gov>; Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: Re: Voting

Hi Penny

Yes, the plan is for the people to vote on the 2021-22 Budget for both the Town and the Board of Education.

The raises for myself and all of the elected officials are contained in the published budget books that are available on the Town Website. To answer your specific question, my raise last year and this year were budgeted to come in line with the Town Policy. I have attached a copy of the policy and also included a link where you can find it posted on the website. The raise last year was 2.25% and the same amount is budgeted for this coming year.

Here is the link to the policy as it is posted on line.

https://www.colchesterct.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf4286/f/uploads/compensationpolicynonunionee2015_revised_4_15_2016.pdf

I also attached the policy.

Let me know if you have further questions.

Mary

Mary Bylone

First Selectman, Colchester

127 Norwich Avenue

Colchester, CT 06415

860-537-7220 office

From: Penny Gadbois <sewcraftypen@att.net>
Sent: Friday, April 23, 2021 10:32 AM
To: Colchester Town Budget <townbudget@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: Voting

I have two questions:

Will the residents of Colchester be voting for the 2021 town budget and how?

What was the percent of increase in the First Selectman's salary in 2020? Is there an increase for the First Selectman's salary in the budget for 2021?

Thank you

Pauline Gadbois
30 North Court
Colchester, CT 06415

From: Heide Perham <h.e.perham@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 25, 2021 4:59 PM
To: Colchester Town Budget <townbudget@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: In favor of budget

I am writing to voice my support of the budget as it was moved forward in the April 21 Board of Finance meeting. There should be no more cuts to this budget.

As it stands, this budget still does not address all the needs in this town, but I understand the consideration to not put an undue burden on taxpayers. However, I would like to point out that in order to become a destination for businesses that would, in turn, help build our tax base, we need to remain a desirable location for people to "live, work and play." We moved to Colchester 7 years ago because we thought this town had great potential. Potential, however, needs investment to become fruitful. To employ an oft-used phrase during this budget season: "we have kicked the can down the road for too many years."

We need to address the needs of the town, and let that drive the budget, not let the budget numbers deter us from doing what needs to be done to make this town as great as possible. We need to invest in our public safety services to keep us all safe, our schools to ensure a positive future for us and our children and our town facilities and staff.

Having worked in Town Hall for over a year, I see how hard our staff work for the residents of this town, often with incredibly limited resources. It is time to do better for all of us and to invest in the future of this town and truly be the Best of Colchester.

Thank you all for your hard work during this budget season and throughout the year.
Sincerely,
Heide Perham

To the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen,

I have lived in Colchester for the past 11 years and have the privilege of now raising my children in town. Every year I listen carefully to the budget discussions and I am always concerned about the resistance to investing in the future of our town. Over the past few years I am deeply disappointed in some members of the Board of Finance failing to recognize the needs we have in town. This year I feel the need to speak up.

The budget process in Colchester is getting increasingly difficult and the services in town have slowly been taken away due to the reductions made every year. Since moving to town I have heard of many people leaving town hall because of the lack of raises coupled with the increased workload leading to town employees leaving for other towns, at higher salaries and increased professional respect. I have had to increasingly pay for services in town because the town is less able to maintain public spaces. Town events, such as concerts on the green, the 57fest, and others either require incredible fundraising or are canceled because the budget doesn't support them. I understood the need to pull back budgets last year in a time of need, but throughout the years we have slowly been pushing off costs to the "next year's" budget and then pushing things off again the next year. It always seems to be a small contingent of voices that are pushing for more and more reductions in the proposed budgets, which means that the overall spending is reduced because of the rising costs of goods every year. The inability of this Committee to identify and secure the needed revenue to provide for the needs and interests of the community is deeply concerning. Deferring projects and underfunding services does not speak to a commitment to building a strong, vibrant community.

Every year I hear from the same familiar contingent of negative voices that we are going to lose taxpayers if we raise taxes. What you don't hear is that you are losing taxpayers because the town is losing the things that attracted them here in the first place. I personally have known five families that have moved out of Colchester, not because the taxes were too high, but because the events and services that brought their family to town have either been canceled or now are cost prohibitive. They moved to towns where services are provided, parks and fields are maintained and updated, and schools are valued by the community of taxpayers with no children in the system. I was infuriated that during a discussion of the budget, the first thing on the chopping block was playground equipment so young families can enjoy our RecPlex. The casual way this was thrown out by members of the Board shows a lack of caring about young families in our town. The company and town came up with an incredible deal to subsidize the cost of an expensive playground and the Board seems to only be looking to cut costs and not invest in the future of this town. This goes for many items in the budget discussions and often appears that some members of the Board of Finance find it easier to attack the person that proposed the budget item rather than the merits of why the item was proposed.

I am also astounded by the utter lack of investment in Colchester Public Schools. I have been following the budget process for years and it seems that the proposed budget is consistently reduced to a point where it goes to paying for essential services and there is a lack of investment in improvements, training, and supplies for the district to stay current with other schools in the area. I am an educator and have had the privilege to visit and work with other districts, work with and in other schools, and have my children in Colchester Public Schools. Our teachers are dedicated to providing the best education for our students, but every town and city in the country says that about their teachers. I have seen teachers at all levels work towards improving their practice and becoming better teachers but there has been a consistent lack of investment from the town so teachers are provided funding to help attend conferences, get training from professionals, or obtain supplies. Colchester is falling behind current trends in education because there is a lack of investment in the future of our children and our community. Local funding for our schools compared to towns around us is the second lowest in the area based on the 2018-2019, only beating Montville by \$117 per student and was 4th lowest in overall funding per pupil when compared to Marlborough, East Hampton, Montville, Hebron, Salem, Glastonbury, Region 8, Middletown, Lebanon, and East Haddam.

After listening to the budget presentations I strongly support the proposals from the Town and the Board of Education as proposed. The proposals meet the needs for the coming fiscal year while also responsibly planning for the future. I encourage the Finance Committee and the Selectboard to stand behind these budget proposals. Furthermore, I encourage the Finance Committee and Selectboard to

adopt a growth mindset and begin looking for opportunities to invest in the community, not just widdle away services and push off fundraising responsibilities to community members. We should not have to argue with our community officials about supporting investments in the community where we have chosen to live and work.

Matthew Parsons
218 Taylor Rd

From: Stacey Kilgus <staceylynnk@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 23, 2021 3:13 PM
To: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: April 21 meeting

Hi Rob,

I am emailing you from my personal email account and speaking I guess as a citizen first, but also as the BoF meeting clerk and a staff member of the First Selectman. I wanted to speak out in regards to the comment Andreas made towards Mary during the discussion on salaries being paid to Social Services staff. I found his words incredibly disrespectful and truly hurtful. I have been listening to these meetings for several months now and while I have come to expect some debate and push back from him, this was way over the line. I also think it was terribly insulting to the 2,143 voters who elected Mary to her office. I feel strongly that, at the very least, he should apologize to Mary just as publicly as he insulted her. But I think he should step down from the Board as well. His comment was beneath the dignity and honor of serving on the Board. My fellow citizens of Colchester and I deserve better.

I have first-hand knowledge of how Mary works tirelessly for the people of this town and her staff who also work hard to keep the town running. She is far beyond mediocre.

Thanks for your time,
Stacey Schweighoffer

April 23, 2021

Mr. Chairman,

I am sending you this email to express my deepest disappointment for the insulting comment that was directed at the First Selectman by member Andreas Bisbikos.

At the start of the meeting, you stated that everyone should be civil in disagreeing with one another. In fact, several people who apparently had issues the night before apologized for their conduct. To say to the First Selectman "we hired you and your mediocre" was clearly meant to be insulting.

There is no place for this kind of behavior from an elected official when dealing with such important issues concerning the budget. Any disagreements Bisbikos may have with the First Selectman or anyone else for that matter should be addressed in a professional manner.

Mr. Chairman I want you to know that I have great respect for you and believe you are an honorable person. It is my sincerest hope that you will correct this type of behavior from Mr. Bisbikos so that we all can address the needs of our citizens.

Respectfully,

Jim Stavola, Chairman

Colchester Police Commission

cell:860.490.5206

email: ewajim@aol.com

From: Kate Forcier <kforcier57@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 22, 2021 5:22 PM
To: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: Re: Proposed budget

Thank you for the information. I'm pleased to hear the board doesn't plan on the full increase to taxpayers.

I do think the town needs to do all it can to attract businesses to offset some of the needed costs. It would be nice to get brownfields funding to address that eyesore in the middle of town. It's really awful and a deterrent to people) businesses coming to town.

I don't disagree with many of the items added to the budget, especially the police manpower.

Thank you, again.

Cathy Forcier

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Sent: Thursday, April 22, 2021 7:57:08 AM
To: Kate Forcier <kforcier57@hotmail.com>
Subject: Re: Proposed budget

Hi Kate,

Thanks for sharing your thoughts, appreciate when people weigh in during the process.

Where we can we are stretching some of the items deferred from last year into multiple years. Last year because of COVID, we had made purchases early, removing them from the 2020/21 budget, especially

on BOE, but we don't have that money this year. We also had a large concession from the school bus company that we asked them to credit to 2021 budget.

We also used fund balance (reserves) last year to keep the taxes down. Although we are doing the same this year, it is mostly replacing what we used last year, so not a lot of budget relief.

Rob

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

From: Kate Forcier <kforcier57@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2021 6:06 PM
To: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: Proposed budget

Hello,

I do not think this is the year to catch up on all that should have been budgeted in years past. Too many people are facing a financial hardship.

My understanding is that the planning dept doesn't think this large increase is wise when trying to attract businesses to town. I agree. These businesses would help take some of the burden off residents. This is important.

Phase in over a few years these items causing such a large increase.

Cathy Forcier
116 Chestnut Dr.

From: Jeff Tucker <Fp291chvfd@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, April 22, 2021 12:05 PM
To: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: Town budget

I'm on a every fix income on fault of mine. After a work related accident. I live on my SSDI. I have been forced into a new life of being 100% disabled.

I'm have lived in town for 25 years and have have given back to the town as a volunteer in the fire service as a fire police officer and a ambulance driver when one was needed. And I still try to help out with the Assistance when I can with my limit. (I was always tart to give back).

I have put 3 kids though the school educational system. And I have to say that I have gone through all those pay to play stuff. And school trips.

And back then I didn't mind because my income was could handle it.

But know being on such of a fixed income with everything in this country going up in cost my medication

just it self has gone up sense of January.

I don't get any of the government help because of income puts me over just bye 200. For the oil Energy assistance. Our food stamps. And these nothing I can do to change it because I'm on a fixed income and I own my house. If I was paying a mortgage I would be addible for 600. In food a mouth and like 800. In home heating oil. But because I don't have a mortgage. It all comes out of my SSDI monthly check.

I have to say No to tax increase.

Jeffrey Tucker

108 prospect street

Fp291chvfd@comcast.net

Sent from my iPad

From: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>

Sent: Thursday, April 22, 2021 7:48 AM

To: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Subject: Fwd: Budget Process - Playground

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>

Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2021 9:21 AM

To: Sara Mertz

Subject: Re: Budget Process - Playground

Thank you Sara. I think you are right about the photos. I have them. I will post them. Thanks! I think it might turn a few heads.

Mary Bylone

First Selectman, Colchester

127 Norwich Avenue

Colchester, CT 06415

860-537-7220 office

From: Sara Mertz <saraannmertz@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2021 9:09 AM

To: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>

Subject: Budget Process - Playground

Mary,

I have been reviewing your proposed budget and attending meetings, and was originally leaning toward Rob's opinion of delaying the playground equipment replacement in lieu of keeping other

necessary town increases. I am at the fields often and see many families there happily playing on the equipment as my kids did years ago, and thought there was no need to address it right now. Then this morning I went to view the playground up close, and was SHOCKED at the condition of the edges and steps and railings with rusty, metal and broken sharp plastic. I think you are right that blocking the equipment and removing it ASAP is the best way to protect our kids, and help the town citizens understand the dire need for replacement.

As you know the majority of citizens will never take the time to listen to your presentations, attend the meetings, or view the items for themselves, but will happily read the Facebook discussions of debate on our town groups. Perhaps there is a way to photograph all these issues with our RecPlex playground, basketball courts, and roofs and post the pictures online so more people can see the evidence or record a video tour that people could link to online to view these problems virtually but up close. So much of the budget season is marketing, and like you, I'm concerned by the direction our town is headed with so many things being in disrepair and pushed off year after year because of the outspoken few.

Thank you for your efforts on this budget, and trying to support those looking to move us forward not backward.

Sara Mertz

From: teresak994@sbcglobal.net <teresak994@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2021 8:50 PM
To: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: Budget

I do not support the town budget!

Teresa Kowalski

Sent from my iPhone

From: Bernard Dennler <bdennler@colchesterct.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2021 6:16 PM
To: kforcier57@hotmail.com <kforcier57@hotmail.com>
Cc: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: Re: Proposed budget

Cathy,

Thank you for reaching out. I appreciate your comments and will note that the entire board is working through the budget to reduce the impact to tax payers through reductions to the request and other

funding sources. I do believe all members are in agreement that we will not put forward a mill rate increase of 1.77 which is what the original budget proposal shows.

Regarding your comment about the Planning Department, I believe you may be referencing a comment made by a member of the Planning and Zoning Commission at a recent meeting. (Another member of the same commission also voiced support for the requests last night but did not identify herself as a member when she spoke.) I do not believe the Planning Department has taken a stance on the budget based on my conversations with the Town Planner who has spoken often of the need to invest in our community in order to attract business. If you have heard something different from the Planning Department, please let me know as it would be important information to consider as we prepare to move the budget forward.

Thank you again for sharing your thoughts with the Board.

Thank you,
Bernie Dennler
Vice Chair, Board of Finance

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2021, 6:08 PM
To: Mike Egan; Mike Hayes; Andreas Bisbikos; Andrea Migliaccio; Bernard Dennler
Subject: Fw: Proposed budget

From: Kate Forcier <kforcier57@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2021 6:06 PM
To: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: Proposed budget

Hello,
I do not think this is the year to catch up on all that should have been budgeted in years past. Too many people are facing a financial hardship.

My understanding is that the planning dept doesn't think this large increase is wise when trying to attract businesses to town. I agree. These businesses would help take some of the burden off residents. This is important.

Phase in over a few years these items causing such a large increase.

Cathy Forcier
116 Chestnut Dr.

