

## Kayla Fortier

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**From:** Andrea Migliaccio  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 1:57 PM  
**To:** Boards & Commissions  
**Subject:** Fw: Colchester 2023 Proposed Budget

Correspondence 1

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** Ihor Rudko <irudko@rudko.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 21, 2023 9:40 PM  
**To:** Denise Turner <dturner@colchesterct.gov>; Rosemary Coyle <rcoyle@colchesterct.gov>; Deborah Bates <dBates@colchesterct.gov>; Jason LaChapelle <jLaChapelle@colchesterct.gov>; First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>; Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>  
**Subject:** Colchester 2023 Proposed Budget

Dear BOF/BOS,

As a longtime resident of Colchester, and a senior citizen on a fixed income I am totally repulsed by your unmitigated disregard for the wellbeing of the citizens of this community. Our community is made up of roughly 45% of citizens that are 55 and over. This budget conveys how out of touch you are with the residents of this town.

Inflation has diminished our fixed incomes to a point where we have to make a choice between food and medical expenses. Each year for at least the last ten years I have witnessed, what can be best described, as a scene from one flew over the cuckoo's nest and it relates to both parties. But this year's budget shenanigans take the Oscar. Putting forth the LARGEST tax increase in Colchester history at a time of significant economic hardship is abhorrent, you all should be ashamed!

Ihor Rudko

Colchester Road

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## Kayla Fortier

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**From:** Andrea Migliaccio  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 1:58 PM  
**To:** Boards & Commissions  
**Subject:** Fw: Public Statement on Budget

Correspondence 2

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** PAUL BUREAU <paul\_bureau@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 18, 2023 7:06 AM  
**To:** Denise Turner <dturner@colchesterct.gov>; Rosemary Coyle <rcoyle@colchesterct.gov>; Deborah Bates <dBates@colchesterct.gov>; Jason LaChapelle <jLaChapelle@colchesterct.gov>; First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>; Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>  
**Subject:** Public Statement on Budget

Dear Colchester BOF and BOS,

Inflation has skyrocketed, interest rates have jumped, and energy costs have risen with no relief in sight. Yet the Colchester Board of Education (BOE) brazenly approved a \$4.13 million increase, equivalent to a 9.83% increase in spending.

And the new Superintendent, on the job since January 2023, is already requesting a \$50,000 increase. Tone-deaf and out-of-touch only begin to describe these actions.

Snubbing their noses at the taxpayers, a sizable percentage who are on fixed incomes and who do not have the ability to increase their incomes, if ever there was a time to show fiscal restraint and respect for taxpayers while balancing the needs of our students, is now. But no, the BOE and the Superintendent attempted to hit a grand slam at the expense of taxpayers; simply despicable and unacceptable. Thanks in part to the Colchester Board of Finance, it voted to reduce the increase to 3.9% as reported by the Rivereast. It remains unclear to me if the revised budget was sufficiently reduced due to the absence of data to help clearly understand how our money is proposed to be spent. In stark contrast to the BOE ask, the town budget proposal is \$10,000 more than last year's budget.

Like our nation, Colchester government has a spending problem. The BOE proposal is one example and another high-profile example is the construction of a new senior center (much needed) at a cost yet to be determined but significantly more than the taxpayer approved cost not to exceed \$9.5 million. Not to exceed means no more than \$9.5 million, until apparently it doesn't. Look for the town to soon ask taxpayers at referendum to exceed the \$9.5 million 'cap' and build a facility that is oversized, too expensive, and located on a parcel of land that is challenging (costly) to develop.

Perhaps as equally significant, town government appears also to have credibility and transparency issues, at least with me. How can Colchester taxpayers have faith in future pronouncements from the

BOE and the Superintendent, or the Senior Center Building Committee? I certainly do not. Fleecing taxpayers doesn't seem to be a concern of either of these entities and equally complicit on the senior center project are the BOF and BOS.

In your elected positions on the BOF and BOS, you are in positions which allow you to evaluate proposals from a broader perspective; to take into account the taxpayers who at the end of the day want to feel confident that their money is prudently spent. You have to weigh proposals of groups lobbying for a specific cause against the interests of all taxpayers. I urge each of you to ask the tough questions and demand no-nonsense answers of the special interest groups who propose to spend more of our money; to relentlessly obtain the necessary facts and data to help make wise decisions on how our money is to be spent.

This requires a commitment to all taxpayers of Colchester, and not to select bands of citizens who support a specific cause, a commitment I am confident all of you made during the last election cycle. Let your actions support your words and do not relinquish to those who are simply the loudest or with whom you may identify politically. Fiscal responsibility is apolitical in a government that truly represents all of its citizens.

Respectfully submitted,  
Paul Bureau  
308 Stollman Road

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## Kayla Fortier

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**From:** Andrea Migliaccio  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 1:59 PM  
**To:** Boards & Commissions  
**Subject:** Fw: Board of Education Budget

correspondence 3

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** Michael Dubreuil <dubreuil@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 16, 2023 10:18 PM  
**To:** First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>; Denise Turner <dturner@colchesterct.gov>; Deborah Bates <dBates@colchesterct.gov>; Rosemary Coyle <rcoyle@colchesterct.gov>; Jason LaChapelle <jLaChapelle@colchesterct.gov>  
**Cc:** Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; BOE@colchesterct.org <BOE@colchesterct.org>  
**Subject:** Board of Education Budget

To the Board of Selectmen,

The purpose of this communication is to ask you to perform your duty in accordance with the town charter: set a date for town meeting and referendum on the education budget.

My understanding is that a letter writing campaign has begun asking you to send the education budget back to the boards for modification. These citizens are telling you that the BOF has made drastic cuts that underfund education. I don't believe the BOE has provided information that substantiates this claim. Sending the budget back is unnecessary. For the last several months both boards have been working on a budget, consistent with the town charter, and you have their result.

In the future the BOE should use this letter as guidance for future interaction with the citizens; because unfortunately I believe the citizens have lost control over our school system. The citizens are asked to further open their wallets with no authority over the performance, features and capabilities of our school system. Those decisions are left to bureaucrats with no accountability to the citizens. I don't believe this can be solved in a month.

Although I believe the BOF approved BOE budget is too high, I don't think it will change any minds at the BOE until they see their budget fail at referendum. Please just send this budget forward. Let the citizens vote.

Vox populi, vox Dei.

Michael Dubreuil  
Woodbine Road

Preamble:

I'd like to begin this by thanking the members of the Board of Education for their volunteer service to their community. We may not agree on everything; however, I will always respect your dedication to your community. This letter may seem extremely critical of you personally. I can't help that. I can say that I believe the foundation of the problem relies on decades of institutional inertia and not the failure of one board member.

We need to “think differently”, and this letter is intended to spark that conversation.

For the past decade it feels as if the performance of the school system has been in freefall. We have seen reduced academic test scoring. We have seen central office staff grow in numbers. The number of students enrolled has decreased by over 30%, while costs to educate each student has increased at a higher level. One has to ask, have we lost control of our school system?

I think you have your answer when you look at the 2023 budget season. On April 26, 2023 the BOE sent a letter to the BOF indicating their priorities in regards to spending cuts. The BOE made the choice to cut 4 Kindergarten teachers to save \$237K from the budget. This would mean cutting full-day kindergarten to half day. Completely absent from this list of cuts were any cuts to administration. What would the priorities of the citizens look like? Would they prioritize a second superintendent over full day kindergarten?

Let's be serious though... The citizens do not actually believe full-day kindergarten is gone. We've seen this game before. This BOE budget year has been similar to recent years. The BOE proposes a significant spending increase. The BOF pushes back against the large increase. The BOE says that popular programs would be threatened if the spending increase doesn't go through. Both boards meet in the middle and a small to moderate increase is pushed to referendum. In the end, the popular programs that were threatened are not cut. It would seem there had been a compromise. Was there compromise or was there actually a failed extortion?

For years the Board of Education has been relinquishing authority to run the school system to the superintendent. This effectively surrenders the citizens's absolute power and authority to an unelected town employee. A town employee who isn't even a tax paying citizen of Colchester. There is no direct method of accountability for the conduct of the superintendent to the citizens. He is free to drive up the budget and make misleading statements to promote it. He will feel no repercussions for an excessively high budget; and in fact makes his job easier. The superintendent should not be making the budget decisions. He should administer the school system based on the decisions the BOE makes through the power vested in them through the citizens of Colchester.

Everyone knows this is true, and it was demonstrated this budget season. When the BOF asked the BOE what a lower budget would be for their operation- they had no answer. The BOE, our elected representatives to manage the school system, defers to the town employee (superintendent) in making the decisions on what to cut. The BOE doesn't do the work. They don't understand their minimum budget and they don't know what non-mandatory items to cut. Those cuts should be guided by the priority of the citizens. The BOE can't do that, because the BOE never bothers to elicit community feedback on what the the priorities of the citizens are.

I mean this in the nicest way possible: when it comes to Colchester Public Schools, the inmates are running the asylum. I have never met an educator who wanted to spend less money on education. They always want to increase spending on education. To be honest, I'm not sure I would want an educator who prioritizes lower costs over increased spending on our students. However, that desire to spend money needs to be tempered. It's the responsibility of the BOE to incorporate the voice of the citizens to manage the features of our school system and ultimately to control spending.

#### Chapter 1: Defining the Problem

In the November 2021 election we saw a wave of Republican candidates win. Republicans had control of the First Selectmen seat, the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Finance and the Board of Education. Your RTC campaign pages are still up; the majority of you identified fiscally conservative concepts in your personal biographies. The citizens elected you with the belief that we would see fiscal conservatism return to the town. And let's be clear, fiscal conservatism is not owned uniquely by one political party. We have many fiscally conservative democrats and unaffiliated voters in town. They voted for you too.

This letter isn't intended for just the Republicans. We hear many times from citizens who didn't vote for Republicans that they need to be represented too. I'm sure there's citizens who would identify themselves as fiscal conservatives who voted for a Democrat. You may even be a Democrat who would personally identify as a fiscal conservative. The theme here is "fiscal conservatism" not red versus blue.

It's critical to remember the principle of fiscal conservatism and what it does not mean. According to Wikipedia, "fiscal conservatism is the economic philosophy of prudence in government spending and debt." The word "prudence" is important- it means "acting with or showing care and thought for the future". It does not mean gutting budgets for the sake of saving the taxpayers money. It means a thoughtful analysis of the minimum government services required, gauging the citizen's willingness to go above the minimum required, and then acting according to the citizens' will.

With respect to the 2023 to 2024 budget year it first appeared as though the stars had aligned. We had Republicans, who ran on a platform of fiscal conservatism, controlling all boards. We had a public school system that will be at our lowest level of enrollment in a decade. The belief among fiscal conservatives such as myself was that this would be a great year to "reset" our education budget. To understand the minimum services required, and then gauge the citizens willingness to exceed the minimum.

All hopes and dreams of fiscally conservative citizens began to waver when the Superintendent asked the Board of Education for an 8.99% increase. Those hopes and dreams were on life support when the Board of Education increased the superintendent's budget request. The Board of Education voted to send the largest spending increase ever to the Board of Finance: 9.83%.

Now I want to clarify that I carefully chose "life support" to describe our feelings at this point. The Board of Education is the most knowledgeable on the school system and when given the benefit of the doubt; perhaps they've embraced the concepts of fiscal conservatism. Perhaps this is the minimum budget required and they were just ready to share the information with us so we could all understand.

Unfortunately that wasn't true either. The Board of Education voted to deny information the Board of Finance was requesting. They wouldn't provide comprehensive answers to citizen questions that were critical of their decision making. In a very bizarre move the Board of Education appeared to embrace the government qualities of George Orwell's dystopian novel Nineteen Eighty-Four. On April 19, 2023 they sent a letter to the community containing the following, "Please consider the source of any information you have obtained, and keep in mind that you can access all BOE official budget documents on the CPS website." So apparently they will now act as the Ministry of Truth.

I want to emphasize how shocking and alarming the March 15th emergency BOE meeting was. A meeting that unlike most BOE meetings was in-person only; of which I personally attended. The purpose of the meeting was to respond to a request for information from the BOF. They asked their budget director, Rachel Linkkila, how difficult providing this information would be. She responded, "easy" indicating it was just a program that needed to be run in the town's budget software. Even though the request for information was easy to complete, the BOE voted to deny BOF their request. At the meeting, BOE members acted indignant with the request. They didn't allow citizen's comments because it "wasn't on the agenda". However, they did allow Democrat BOF Member Mike Egan to pontificate (also not on the agenda) on how they were under no obligation to provide the information. Which actually just stoked the division between the Republican controlled boards. Well played Mr. Egan and shame on Republican BOE members for not realizing what that was really about.

Two quick points:

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- Please help me understand how the community

- benefits from the business director position at BOE, if that person is prevented from providing easy to assemble information requested by the citizens? The citizens pay her salary... and she only serves the interests of BOE members and school administrators
- who may not even live in our community? I don't understand this at all. It's also just another example of how the BOE disrespects the citizens.
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- Some may call the decision to deny the information a "power move". I just don't understand how the BOE, a subordinate board to the BOF (in budget matters), benefits from denying budget information to the BOF. Imagine in your day job if your boss asks you to do something and you just say "no".
- This is unacceptable behavior.
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The problem is that the BOE and Superintendents have fully embraced grandiloquence. From their public documentation, to their emails, to their actual speaking style: there is a lot of information, however it lacks substance. The substance that would allow citizens and other boards to make informed decisions. The BOE provides information through a prism that allows them to bend the narrative to fit the Superintendent's desires and beliefs. That narrative is then used to rile up public support for an ever increasing top line budget number. For them, the advertised cuts may or may not be necessary; they are just a tool used to control public support. The superintendent has already made the choices on what to include and not to include in the school system. This isn't how we should be operating, this isn't an oligarchy; we have a representative democracy.

I'd also like to point out the problems with making the Superintendent the spokesperson for the education budget. I would like to contrast that with the recent political attacks against Finance Director, Mary Williamson, by Democrat BOF member Mike Hayes. Ms. Williamson is a town employee who is not the spokesperson for the town. Literally everyone in town, with the exception of Mr. Hayes believes she is off-limits for political attacks. When it comes to the school system, the BOE cowardly shields themselves from criticism by putting a town employee in front of the citizens as their spokesperson. It's unacceptable and unfair to everyone involved; because that superintendent is not accountable to the citizens.

## Chapter 2: The Future is Fiscal Conservatism & Populism

You may not like this analogy but I think it's great. The people should vote on our school system the same way they purchase a car. They want to know the standard features, and then we can vote on the upgrades.

Here is the fiscal conservatism:

In the education world the standard features would be the minimum amount of spending possible. This means the minimal level of staffing required to meet the minimum standards based upon the proposed student enrollment. This means: teachers at their per-pupil contract maximum, a skeleton crew of administration and central office staff, zero non-required electives, the bare minimum in custodial and cafeteria staffing. The bare minimum everywhere. No arbitrary minimum as defined by the desires of the Superintendent or administrators. The bare minimum that would continue to allow state funding to continue (i.e. keep our town out of court.)

I would also point out that as state funding decreases, we need to consider which state mandates we embrace. There may come a point when the state reimbursement is minimal compared to the costs of unfunded mandates. The BOE should publish an annual report to inform the citizens when that threshold is reached.

Now don't get me wrong, that would likely make for a poor school system. I don't believe that's the school system Colchester wants. However, if we can't identify that number and share the data that created it with the

public, we don't have all the information. That is the starting point of building trust and is the foundation of fiscal conservatism.

Here is the populism:

On a regular basis (5 to 10 years), the BOE should conduct a survey of citizens to understand what additional features they want in their school system. This should be more formal than Survey Monkey and may require significant cost to execute. However, getting the voice of the citizens is the most important part when setting the priorities of the school system. We seek the advice of the Superintendent and administrators; however, they don't make the decisions. They should offer information to the citizens guided by their formal education and years of experience... they don't make decisions on what to fund.

What are the "features" of our school system, and how do we present them? I will offer some examples. The costs and content should be considered fictitious; however, it should be a guide on what to put in the survey:

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- Full Day Kindergarten. Cost: \$300k
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- Band at JJIS. Cost: \$105k
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- Software Development elective at Bacon Academy. Cost: \$50k
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- Full Day Pre-K for all children ages 4 and up: \$400k
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- 
- Class Size Enhancement for Kindergarten (class sizes of < 22): \$100k
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- 
- Class Size Enhancement for Kindergarten (class sizes of < 17): \$250k
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- An assistant superintendent: Cost: \$210k
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- 
- 
- A business director for the BOE: Cost \$115k
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Allow the citizens of Colchester to guide the BOE to make the difficult decisions on what budget features to fund. Once you create an inclusive environment where the citizens can vote on features of our school system, you create buy-in for the top dollar number.

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## Kayla Fortier

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**From:** Andrea Migliaccio  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 2:00 PM  
**To:** Boards & Commissions  
**Subject:** Fw: follow-up

Correspondence 4

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** Melissa Deacon <melissajdeacon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 12, 2023 4:04 PM  
**To:** Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>  
**Subject:** follow-up

Good afternoon Andrea,

I'm trying to follow-up with you regarding the vote that took place on May 8, 2023. I've listened to the audio recording and during the time of the vote there is a discrepancy between a reduction of \$1.3 million vs \$1.5 million. How does a vote move forward when you don't all agree on what the reduction is? Why did Art abstain? The discussion takes place at 3 hours 53 minutes on the audio recording, but there are people talking quietly and not all the words can be made out. Art abstains between when you said let's wait until Wednesday since a member has a question and when Tim says why can't we continue to vote?

What is a reason to abstain? Is this outlined anywhere?

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,  
Melissa

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## Kayla Fortier

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**From:** Andrea Migliaccio  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 2:01 PM  
**To:** Boards & Commissions  
**Subject:** Fw: Public Statement On This Year's Budget

Correspondence 5

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** Taras Rudko <trudko@rudko.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 11, 2023 5:20 PM  
**To:** Denise Turner <dturner@colchesterct.gov>; Rosemary Coyle <rcoyle@colchesterct.gov>; Deborah Bates <dBates@colchesterct.gov>; Jason LaChapelle <jLaChapelle@colchesterct.gov>; First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>; Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>  
**Subject:** Public Statement On This Year's Budget

Dear BOF/BOS,

I am issuing you this correspondence to convey my position on the currently proposed town and school budgets. My family and friends live here in town; so, I speak as a son, a father, a husband, a neighbor, a taxpayer and as a conservative Republican. As simply and as plainly as I can put this to you, this budget is abhorrent, reckless and cruel.

It seems that the new norm every year is to gaslight the public with shock and awe tactics in an attempt to start off so high that a 50% decrease in a proposed budget seems like a win. I can assure the public that it's not!

As I presented during the citizens comments portion of the May 2<sup>nd</sup> Board of Finance Special Meeting, the following are my points of contention:

This represents the LARGEST tax increase in Colchester history both on the school and town side.

On the school's side we are rewarding failure and those funds will not benefit our students. Over the past 10 years our enrollment has declined by 33% while our funding has increased by at least that much. Our test scores have declined, truancy is up, college admittance is down. I would conclude that throwing money

at the problem is neither helping nor producing a better product. On top of that, the Superintendent is looking for a \$50K raise, our educational leadership has made such poor business decisions that it has led to legal jeopardy and settlements. The school also used ARPA funds to hire staff and those funds are now gone and as a result it will leave behind a commitment that they can't afford. In addition, Colchester is acquiescing to unfunded state mandates, whereas surrounding communities have chosen to defund the state by cutting the unfunded mandates.

On the town side, we have had roughly \$1.2M in additional revenue to the grand list via motor vehicle assessments, \$500K for taxes on the gas pipeline and \$675K for the energy plant. Again, rough math \$2.3M in additional revenue and yet the town is coming forward with close to a zero-dollar increase. Sounds good right! Wrong! That \$2.3M has been committed to spending (as opposed to tax relief) and if this budget passes it will almost certainly result in a ~10% tax increase next year when motor vehicle reevaluations go down and leave the town's grand list shy of \$1.2M to \$1.5M.

Not to mention that as soon as the town passes a budget, they are going back to the taxpayers for another \$1.5M to cover the shortfall in the senior center project.

This does nothing more than gentrify our community, keep minorities out and chase lifelong residents out. Both Republicans and Democrats alike should be ashamed of this budget, I know I am!

I would ask that you include this statement in correspondences for each of your next corresponding meeting.

Disgusted,

Taras W. Rudko

Chairman, Colchester RTC

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## Kayla Fortier

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**From:** Andrea Migliaccio  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 2:01 PM  
**To:** Boards & Commissions  
**Subject:** Fw: Maintenance Budgets

correspondence 6

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** Dave Koji <dkoji@colchesterct.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 11, 2023 4:15 PM  
**To:** Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Maintenance Budgets

Thanks, Andrea. I was just curious how the costs were broken out. In particular, I was thinking about the playground, tennis courts, pickleball courts, and basketball courts.

Thanks,  
Dave

On May 8, 2023, at 3:38 PM, Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov> wrote:

Hi Dave,

Short and long-term maintenance costs are built into several line items. It depends on which department and if it's ongoing or particular to that year. Anything, in particular, your looking for?

When we do the "Operations Audit" following the Financial Audits, we will likely adjust various ledgers to consolidate such items. The Town and the School have identified efficiencies they would like to have in the accounting practices but for now, we navigate.

Please let me know if you have a specific project, you're looking into in this case.

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** Dave Koji <dkoji@colchesterct.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 2, 2023 12:57 PM  
**To:** Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>  
**Subject:** Maintenance Budgets

Hey Andrea,

I hope you are well. Can you please tell me how short- and long-term maintenance budgets work for town assets? Is there specific line items in the documents I can look at?

Thanks,  
Dave

## Kayla Fortier

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**From:** Andrea Migliaccio  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 2:02 PM  
**To:** Boards & Commissions  
**Subject:** Fw: Fire Alarm System at Bacon Academy (and other schools)

correspondence 7

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** Michelle Millington <mmillington@colchesterct.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 11, 2023 2:06 PM  
**To:** First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>  
**Cc:** Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>; Denise Turner <dturner@colchesterct.gov>; Rosemary Coyle <rcoyle@colchesterct.gov>; Jason LaChapelle <jLaChapelle@colchesterct.gov>; Deborah Bates <dBates@colchesterct.gov>; aoliphant@colchesterct.org <aoliphant@colchesterct.org>; Marguerite Gignac <mgignac@colchesterct.org>; Donna Antonacci <dantonacci@colchesterct.org>; Rosemary Gignac <rgignac@colchesterct.org>; Mary Tomasi <mtomasi@colchesterct.org>; crivers@colchesterct.org <crivers@colchesterct.org>; Mary Williamson <mwilliamson@colchesterct.gov>; Rachel Linkkila <rlinkkila@colchesterct.org>; Daniel Sullivan <dsullivan@colchesterct.org>; Steven Hoffmann <shoffmann@ColchesterCT.gov>; Sean Shoemaker <firemarshal@colchesterct.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Fire Alarm System at Bacon Academy (and other schools)

Thank you for your response.

Please post the audio so everyone can hear it.

Michelle Millington

Sent from my iPhone

On May 11, 2023, at 2:03 PM, First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov> wrote:

Hi Michelle,

I listened to the audio, and you raised your voice when you spoke about being scared. The quote about the children are your words verbatim. I'm not interested in a back and forth. I went to the experts on the fire alarm system to ensure that the public and our children had nothing to fear when it came to the fire alarm system at our schools. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Andreas



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**From:** Michelle Millington <mmillington@colchesterct.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 11, 2023 1:51 PM  
**To:** First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.org>  
**Cc:** Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>; Denise Turner <dturner@colchesterct.gov>; Rosemary Coyle <rcoyle@colchesterct.gov>; Jason LaChapelle <jLaChapelle@colchesterct.gov>; Deborah Bates <dBates@colchesterct.gov>; aoliphant@colchesterct.org; Marguerite Gignac <mgignac@colchesterct.org>; Donna Antonacci <dantonacci@colchesterct.org>; Rosemary Gignac <rgignac@colchesterct.org>; Mary Tomasi <mtomasi@colchesterct.org>; crivers@colchesterct.org; Mary Williamson <mwilliamson@colchesterct.gov>; Rachel Linkkila <rlinkkila@colchesterct.org>; Daniel Sullivan <dsullivan@colchesterct.org>; Steven Hoffmann <shoffmann@ColchesterCT.gov>; Sean Shoemaker <firemarshal@colchesterct.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Fire Alarm System at Bacon Academy (and other schools)

Mr Bisbikos,

My comment made in last nights meeting was that the fire alarm system was 30 years old and needs updating. It was NEVER said to be faulty. I said it needs to be updated and it can be difficult to find parts for a system that old. The capital funds money cut from the BOE budget was earmarked to address this issue.

Please do not misquote me.

I am waiting for the audio file to be uploaded. I am happy to send you a copy of my exact statement.

Michelle Millington

Sent from my iPhone

On May 11, 2023, at 1:44 PM, First Selectman <[selectman@colchesterct.gov](mailto:selectman@colchesterct.gov)> wrote:

Hi Everyone,

There was a comment made during last night's BOF citizens comments that I wanted to get clarity on. I appreciate Sean Shoemaker for providing the answers.

Sincerely,

Andreas

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**From:** Sean Shoemaker <[firemarshal@colchesterct.gov](mailto:firemarshal@colchesterct.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 11, 2023 1:13 PM  
**To:** First Selectman <[selectman@colchesterct.gov](mailto:selectman@colchesterct.gov)>  
**Cc:** Steven Hoffmann <[shoffmann@ColchesterCT.gov](mailto:shoffmann@ColchesterCT.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: Fire Alarm System at Bacon Academy (and other schools)

Andreas,

All the schools are inspected by me on an annual basis, as required by the State of CT, in the fall around the opening of the schools. At that time, all fire protection items in the schools such as fire alarm systems and sprinkler systems are checked to ensure that they have been inspected by licensed contractors on an annual basis. The records of those inspections are maintained at all the schools and in the district operations office. I am given copies as well. In addition, the fire alarm is tested by the schools on a regular basis when conducting the state mandated fire drills, which I am often on site to monitor.

The only current concern is the age of the smoke detectors in Bacon Academy. They are currently of analog style and need to be updated to digital in the near future as replacement detectors are becoming difficult to source. This does not currently affect the operation of the fire alarm system.

*Sean C. Shoemaker*, IAAI-FIT

Fire Marshal/EMD

Colchester Fire & EMS

<Outlook-3fciaaxq.png>

52 Old Hartford Road

Colchester, CT 06415

Phone: 860-207-6870

Fax: 860-531-9393

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**From:** First Selectman <[selectman@colchesterct.gov](mailto:selectman@colchesterct.gov)>

**Sent:** Thursday, May 11, 2023 12:52 PM

**To:** Steven Hoffmann <[shoffmann@ColchesterCT.gov](mailto:shoffmann@ColchesterCT.gov)>

**Cc:** Sean Shoemaker <[firemarshal@colchesterct.gov](mailto:firemarshal@colchesterct.gov)>

**Subject:** Fire Alarm System at Bacon Academy (and other schools)

Hi Steve,

A comment was made by BOE member Michelle Millington at last night's BOF meeting that it scared her that "our children, any of our children in this town, could be in a building like that (Bacon Academy) where potentially a fire alarm isn't up to date."

Questions:

1. Ms. Millington's statement seems very serious. Does the public have to fear the effectiveness of the fire alarms at Bacon Academy, or any of our schools?
2. What steps are taken to ensure that our fire alarm system is effective on a yearly basis? Is their documentation to back that up?
3. Is there any level of concern related to our fire alarm systems?

Sincerely,

Andreas

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## Kayla Fortier

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**From:** Andrea Migliaccio  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 2:03 PM  
**To:** Boards & Commissions  
**Subject:** Fw: Putting in my two cents...Budget Season 2023

correspondence 8

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** Margo Gignac <mgnac@colchesterct.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 9, 2023 10:39 PM  
**To:** Jondahl Koonankeil <jondahlmarie@gmail.com>  
**Cc:** Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; Christopher Rivers <crivers@colchesterct.org>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>; aoliphant@colchesterct.org <aoliphant@colchesterct.org>; dantonacci@colchesterct.org <dantonacci@colchesterct.org>; mmillington@colchesterct.org <mmillington@colchesterct.org>; mtomasi@colchesterct.org <mtomasi@colchesterct.org>; rgignac@colchesterct.org <rgignac@colchesterct.org>  
**Subject:** Re: Putting in my two cents...Budget Season 2023

Dear Mrs. Koonankeil,

Thank you for taking the time to contact the Board of Education. Please note that emails to the Board the of Education are considered the same as public comment at a Board Meeting. Generally speaking, the Board does not respond to public comment but uses this information to guide their decision making. Depending on the topic, they may ask the Superintendent or another District employee to follow up with you. Likewise, public comment might lead to a topic being added to a future meeting agenda. I have included the Board of Finance on this response as well.

Best regards,

Margo Gignac  
Secretary, Colchester Board of Education

On Tue, May 9, 2023 at 6:43 PM Jondahl Koonankeil <[jondahlmarie@gmail.com](mailto:jondahlmarie@gmail.com)> wrote:  
Greetings,

My name is Jondahl Koonankeil, my husband and I have been residents of Colchester for the past 16 years. We have 3 daughters who have been and are currently going through the Colchester school system including CES, Jackter and WJJMS. Due to a variety of reasons, my oldest now attends Mercy High School in Middletown.

I had honestly never considered sending my children to private school and have always wanted the option of Bacon to be there for my next two kids. But unfortunately the climate this town has whipped itself into with the schools heading for some unbelievably tough years ahead, I can't see how Bacon is going to be a decent option.

I implore you to do your best to keep opportunities available to the kids of Colchester. Band, foreign language, class size and school climate are non negotiables for me. In this day and age and the town we live in, Colchester of all places should not be looking at the possibility of a mediocre school system. I won't even get started on the elimination of full day kindergarten. That's just embarrassing and asking people with small children to clear out of here. But maybe that's what the old guard of Colchester wants? Let's move 10 years backward instead of forward? Appalling.

Thank you for the time you take out of your lives to serve on this board. I understand much of it is thankless and I don't mean to end on a sour note. I just want to see this town succeed. When your schools succeed, your town succeeds, THE TWO GO HAND IN HAND.

Please SUPPORT/INCREASE the education budget for 2023.

Thank you,  
Jondahl Koonankeil  
[14 Penee Lane, Colchester](#)

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## Kayla Fortier

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**From:** Andrea Migliaccio  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 2:04 PM  
**To:** Boards & Commissions  
**Subject:** Fw: questions

Correspondence 9

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** Melissa Deacon <melissajdeacon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 9, 2023 9:01 AM  
**To:** Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>  
**Subject:** questions

Good morning Andrea,

I am trying to understand the budget process as I have only lived in Colchester a few years. Could you tell me how the BOF arrived at the \$1.3 million reduction to the BOE budget? I understand mill rate is involved and trying to determine what tax increases will affect the citizens of the town, but what calculations and formulas does the BOF use to determine how much the citizens can afford?

I'm a facts and formulas type of person by my career and my nature. As a dietitian, I can't calculate a patient's needs just by observation, I need to consider their co-morbid conditions, current weight, labs, etc. I would guess the same is true for determining what citizens can afford for taxes and possible tax increases. What factors are considered and used? Is there somewhere on the BOF website where this is outlined or in the town charter? Again, I'm trying to understand the process and steps and how we arrived at this point.

- How can the budget move forward to the BOS, when from my understanding there seems to be a conflict in the amount of the reduction?
- My understanding was the budget that was passed last week, was based on monies being available based on the auditor's report. Why was the budget voted on before the results of the auditor's report were available?
- Was the budget that passed at last week's BOF meeting contingent certain amounts of money being available from different funds/accounts?

Lastly, a suggestion is to possibly compile a list of FAQs during the budget process and post on the BOF website to cut down on the repeated questions and for more clarity. Another suggestion may be a statement by each member as to why they voted in support or against a certain budget. These suggestions are in an effort to make things more understandable to everyone. This is an intense process and it seems as though the more background information available would make it easier for everyone to be on the same page and have better discussions.

Thank you for your time.  
Kind regards,  
Melissa

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## Kayla Fortier

---

**From:** Andrea Migliaccio  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 2:05 PM  
**To:** Boards & Commissions  
**Subject:** Fw: Question about Process

Correspondence 10

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** CINDY PRAISNER <praisner@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 6, 2023 5:14 PM  
**To:** Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Question about Process

Also, when you were determining revenue, were you using the higher or lower ECS amount? I remember discussion around it and wasn't sure where it landed.

On 05/06/2023 4:56 PM CINDY PRAISNER <praisner@comcast.net> wrote:

Hi Andrea,

I could not stay until the end of the BOF meeting on Tuesday. The recording was just posted yesterday and I finally had time to watch the remainder of the meeting.

I am still confused about the meeting on Monday. Is this the 3 min meeting where the budgets get passed on to referendum where citizens in the room get to vote yea or nay directly? Or another type of meeting?

The clarification seemed to be specifically on spending for the \$695K but I thought I heard your suggestion to use more than just \$695 to keep programs intact. Will the auditor weigh in on the potential use of assigned funds for operational expenses as well?

Thanks,  
Cindy

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## Kayla Fortier

---

**From:** Andrea Migliaccio  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 2:06 PM  
**To:** Boards & Commissions  
**Subject:** Fw: Question about Process

Correspondence 11

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** CINDY PRAISNER <praisner@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 6, 2023 4:56 PM  
**To:** Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>  
**Subject:** Question about Process

Hi Andrea,  
I could not stay until the end of the BOF meeting on Tuesday. The recording was just posted yesterday and I finally had time to watch the remainder of the meeting.

I am still confused about the meeting on Monday. Is this the 3 min meeting where the budgets get passed on to referendum where citizens in the room get to vote yea or nay directly? Or another type of meeting?

The clarification seemed to be specifically on spending for the \$695K but I thought I heard your suggestion to use more than just \$695 to keep programs intact. Will the auditor weigh in on the potential use of assigned funds for operational expenses as well?

Thanks,  
Cindy

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## Kayla Fortier

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**From:** Andrea Migliaccio  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 2:09 PM  
**To:** Boards & Commissions  
**Subject:** Fw: Citizens Concerns regarding BOF decision on BOE budget

Correspondence 12

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** Melissa Deacon <melissajdeacon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 4, 2023 1:02 PM  
**To:** Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>; Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; Andreas Bisbikos <abisbikos@colchesterct.gov>; Rosemary Coyle <rcoyle@colchesterct.gov>; Denise Turner <dturner@colchesterct.gov>; Jason LaChapelle <jLaChapelle@colchesterct.gov>; Deborah Bates <dBates@colchesterct.gov>  
**Cc:** BOE@colchesterct.org <BOE@colchesterct.org>; dsullivan@colchesterct.org <dsullivan@colchesterct.org>; Charles Hewes <chewes@colchesterct.org>; ebutson@colchesterct.org <ebutson@colchesterct.org>; jomeara@colchesterct.org <jomeara@colchesterct.org>; cbennett@colchesterct.org <cbennett@colchesterct.org>; abegue@colchesterct.org <abegue@colchesterct.org>; aoliphant@colchesterct.org <aoliphant@colchesterct.org>; crivers@colchesterct.org <crivers@colchesterct.org>; Heather Petit <hpetit@colchesterct.org>; MikeSink20@gmail.com <mikesink20@gmail.com>; mtomasi@colchesterct.org <mtomasi@colchesterct.org>; rgignac@colchesterct.org <rgignac@colchesterct.org>; rlinkkila@colchesterct.org <rlinkkila@colchesterct.org>; mmillington@colchesterct.org <mmillington@colchesterct.org>; dantonacci@colchesterct.org <dantonacci@colchesterct.org>; mritter@goodwin.com <mritter@goodwin.com>  
**Subject:** Citizens Concerns regarding BOF decision on BOE budget

Dear BOS and BOF,

The decision at the Tuesday, May 4, 2023 meeting was not surprising, but disappointing nonetheless.

The job of elected officials is to represent **all** of your constituents, not just those that voted for you. However, one BOF member stated "I do not have to listen," which is very disconcerting. How can an elected official say they do not have to listen? Over 30 constituents spoke for the BOE budget over the course of several meetings to not to reduce it versus only about 5 individuals continually spoke against it. Why do those 5 individuals' opinions seem to weigh more than others?

The BOF mission statement is "Balancing the needs of Colchester with its ability to pay." I have asked these before, but still do not have clear answers.

- 
- 
- How did you determine what Colchester residents are able to pay?
- 
- 
- 
- Was there a formula that you used? Was it based on your opinions

- or statistics?
- 
- 
- 
- How did you arrive at what percent increase the public will
- vote on for the BOE budget?
- 

The BOF asked to go through each supply line, but was this done for the town budget? Did you ask what the \$3000 for the Memorial Day Parade is for? Did you ask how many vehicles need new tires for the police department or the price of each tire that will be needed? You are trusting those departments to make the best decision with the allotted monies, but you are not giving that same trust and respect to the Superintendents and BOE.

You have continued to say that the BOE budget will not pass the referendum, but how do you know? The budget may not pass referendum, but not for the reasons you may believe.

- 
- 
- What are the long term consequences of this decision to the
- town as a whole?
- 
- 
- 
- Why not start with the 8% increase and see if that passes
- the referendum? Put it out to the voters to decide what they are able to manage - isn't that what a
- democracy is all about?
- 

I am baffled by the conduct of the Board of Finance and the lack of transparency of how this decision has been made regarding the BOE budget.  
I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Melissa Deacon  
White Oak Dr, Colchester

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## Kayla Fortier

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**From:** Andrea Migliaccio  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 2:09 PM  
**To:** Boards & Commissions  
**Subject:** Fw: 5/2/23 BOE decision

Correspondence 13

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** Carrie Barthel <carrieab1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 4, 2023 11:28 AM  
**To:** Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>  
**Subject:** 5/2/23 BOE decision

Dear BOF members and BOF chair,

I am writing to express my disappointment with your decision made in regards to the BOE budget on May 2, 2023.

I respectfully ask you to continue reading this letter at this point, and not to just stop at my first sentence. Unfortunately, based on all the meetings I have attended, I feel as if most of the time is spent hearing people talk, but not really listening to what they have to say.

To not provide necessary funds for our schools to keep growing and educating our children is irresponsible. It will not only hurt the students and families in the system, but it will hurt the Colchester community.

I come from Ohio, where the public schools have slowly been whittled down by a “death of 1000 cuts. There is only half day Kindergarten, and parents have to pay tuition if they want full day Kindergarten. As you can imagine, many don’t, as they cannot afford it. There is also no public preschool. They’ve cut Enrichment Programs, Arts classes, and teachers. Families leave these towns with the now poor-rated public schools and flock to towns that have the government officials who are willing to vote and fight for their schools and children. If families cannot move, they send their children to private schools and Catholic schools, sacrificing many things in order to pay the tuition. When house shopping, people no longer look to these towns to live, unless they can afford to pay for the private school in the area.

I was so excited to come to Colchester and give my children the chance for a quality education. The teachers here are amazing, even with all the cuts that have happened over the years, and have been able to do so much with so little. If you continue to not support the schools, the ability for our teachers and schools to maintain, and even grow our curriculum, offerings, and support for our children goes away.

And frankly, so do the families.

Do you know how many conversations I have had in the past three weeks with parents who are now looking into Magnet and private schools as a “back-up” option? What will that do to your tax revenue for the town when all these taxpayers leave? How will local businesses fare when all these people leave? How will you attract people to move into the town when you cannot promise them that we have great schools and that the Community is focused on making them even greater? What will that do to the sense of community for

Colchester when all these families leave? You want additional support for the Seniors. How will they get support if the voters are leaving?

I ask you to please reconsider your decision about meeting the 1.3 million cut. I would like to be able to vote on the proposal from the BOE. It is, after all, a democracy. You are, after all, our elected officials who are supposed to be representing the people. This is ALL the people. Let ALL the people vote.

*"We create innovative thinkers for a dynamic world."* This is listed at the top of every page on the Colchester Schools website. It is not *"We teach students the basics. And now they now need to learn how to function in a Dynamic world."* You need to allow the schools to live up to their purpose.

You need to listen to what the BOE is saying and what tax payers are asking for. You need to listen to what the Community is saying. And vote for the Community.

Sincerely,  
Carrie Barthel  
Harbor Rd, Colchester

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## Kayla Fortier

---

**From:** Andrea Migliaccio  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 2:15 PM  
**To:** Boards & Commissions  
**Subject:** Fw: First Selectman's Office Salaries

Correspondence 14

Andrea Migliaccio, Chairman, Board of Finance  
860-705-1118

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**From:** Jason LaChapelle <jLaChapelle@colchesterct.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 19, 2023 12:58 PM  
**To:** First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>; Rosemary Coyle <rcoyle@colchesterct.gov>; Denise Turner <dturner@colchesterct.gov>; Deborah Bates <dBates@colchesterct.gov>  
**Cc:** Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>; Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; Mary Williamson <mwilliamson@colchesterct.gov>  
**Subject:** First Selectman's Office Salaries

Board,

Last night Rosemary made the claim that both employees in the First Selectman's office were seeing raises far above the contractual obligation of 2.5%. I believe she said one was seeing a 7% increase and the other a 10% increase. When the town's finance director went on record explaining this, Rosemary certainly seemed to imply that the finance director was not being truthful or transparent.

Today I verbally FOI'd finance records in order to get to the bottom of this. Here's what I found.

The Executive Assistant to the First Selectman is budgeted for a **\$58,901** salary in the 2023-2024 budget. That position had a salary of **\$57,464.58** in the 2022-2023 budget. Simple math shows that 2.5% of **\$57,464.58** is **\$1,436.61**. Adding these two together gets an amount of **\$58,901.19**. This is 19 cents higher than the budgeted line up of **\$58,901**. In other words, the 2023-2024 budgeted amount for this position represents ONLY a 2.5% increase in salary -- precisely what it is the town's obligation per policy.

The Department Clerk is budgeted for **\$21,882** in annual pay in the 2023-2024 budget. That position had an annual pay of **\$21,349.80** in the 2022-2023 budget. Simple math shows that 2.5% of **\$21,349.80** is **\$533.75**. Adding these two together gets an amount of **\$21,883.55**. This is actually **\$1.55** higher than the budgeted line up of **\$21,882**. In other words, the 2023-2024 budgeted amount for this position represents LESS than the 2.5% increase in pay, though this \$1.55 in discrepancy is likely explained by this position being hourly and not salary.

We heard a lot last night about honesty and transparency in this years' budgets. I believe the record needs to be publicly corrected regarding this issue as it was raised by Rosemary during multiple meetings, including last night where she pressed the issue. The public needs to be made aware that the issue has been resolved and that Andreas did not give his office employees preferential treatment by giving them 7% and 10% raises that

nobody else got, but that they received only the 2.5% increase as stipulated by town policy.

While I disagree with automatic raises for anyone, it's irrelevant here. What matters is that we are being honest and transparent with the citizens and that when we misspeak, we correct ourselves.

Thanks,

Jason LaChapelle  
Board of Selectmen