

First Selectman

From: Margo Gignac <mgignac@colchesterct.org>
Sent: Monday, May 15, 2023 6:47 PM
To: Michael Dubreuil
Cc: Andrea Migliaccio; Deborah Bates; Denise Turner; First Selectman; Jason LaChapelle; Rosemary Coyle; Art Shilosky; boe@colchesterct.org; John Thomas; Mike Egan; Mike Hayes; Tim Vaillancourt
Subject: Re: [BOE] Special Education Spending

Dear Mr. Dubreuil,

Thank you for taking the time to contact the Board of Education. Please note that emails to the Board 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.

Best regards,

Margo Gignac
Secretary, Colchester Board of Education

On Mon, May 15, 2023 at 6:28 PM Michael Dubreuil <dubreuilm@gmail.com> wrote:

To the BOS, BOF, and BOE,

I am writing to you about a concern I have with special education spending and a budget move proposed by the Board of Finance. My understanding is the BOF is using a special accounting maneuver to account for a very large BOE expense that we are being led to believe should be reimbursed by the state. I think it's a smart move to solve a temporary problem. Unfortunately, I believe the citizens may have been misled on how temporary this problem is... and it's known by individuals with more information that this expense will likely not be reimbursed. (And that it could continue for years.)

I have that feeling based on my analysis of a March 15th letter from the Director of Pupil Services and Special Education to the Superintendent with the subject: Excess Cost Eligibility. This letter is available on the Board of Education's budget website under the title: [Explanation Relative to Special Education Increase](#). Interestingly, the document contains guidelines from the Connecticut Department of Education on how a district should navigate reimbursement for special education.

The Director writes, "In a very rare exception, a placement within the state was not able to be secured despite exhaustive efforts by the district due to a student's highly individualized, extremely significant needs. A placement outside of the state was finally identified as an appropriate placement and program to meet the needs of the student."

My concern with this statement is that it implies a placement was made without regard for the state reimbursement guidelines. Worse, I believe the BOE may be aware that it's unlikely the district will receive reimbursement for this item because the guidelines were not followed. Worse still, I believe information is being withheld from the public under the false pretense of student confidentiality to prevent transparency of this issue. If the placement was made against guidelines there should be an investigation to understand what

happened. The results of that investigation should be public. This has the appearance of a \$600k mistake by the school system. How will the citizens know this will not happen again?

I may be totally wrong. Our district may be unfairly treated by the state. As citizens, we won't know until the BOE releases more information. I think when it rises to the dollar amounts we're talking about here, we need to respect the student's privacy; however, we need more transparency.

With respect to the placement described by the Director, could the BOE publicly answer the following questions:

(1) Should "placement outside of the state" really be interpreted as a placement not approved by the state of Connecticut? And is therefore ineligible for reimbursement unless certain conditions are met?

(2) Who initiated the placement? The school district, the parents, or a state agency?

(3) If the parents initiated the placement, was there a due process hearing or court proceeding that ruled in favor of the parents placement?

(4) Did the district and the parent come to an agreement without utilizing the special education due process procedures?

(5) The guidelines are fairly clear that if the district initiated the placement, we're probably not getting reimbursement. If the parents initiated the placement, we should get reimbursement if there was a due process or court proceeding. If a state agency made the placement, we're probably getting reimbursed. I'm only left with the perception that with respect to this placement, the district did something that they shouldn't have done. I could be wrong and perhaps there's something I'm missing; would the BOE care to explain with respect to the guidelines the theory upon which the district would be reimbursed?

With respect to the April 4, 2023 Board of Finance and Board of Education meeting minutes as submitted by Heather Petit I do take personal grievances. First, the way my citizen comment is documented isn't accurate, and makes me appear profoundly insensitive. Secondly, the response by the Superintendent doesn't seem accurate when compared to the above referenced document. My citizen comment is documented as, "Mr. Dubreuil asked why the district has to pay for special education and why does it have to pay for a student with a high cost of outplacement? Mr. Sullivan stated that it is a law and the district has to comply with the law." My comment is at 3:26:50 in the audio recording.

Unfortunately, as citizens we don't have enough information on this placement. We're left to formulate our own theories due to the void of information. From my perspective, it appears like the school system should have denied the \$600k placement request, then the parents could request a hearing in accordance with CSG 10-76h-3. If they were successful, the \$600k placement would go forward, and the district would be eligible for reimbursement. Would the BOE like to elaborate on the Superintendent's response and my interpretation on how the events should have occurred to make this expense eligible for reimbursement?

At the April 4th meeting at 3:38:15, Ms. Millington of the BOE interrupted citizens' comments to make a comment about the placement: "We just need to stop blaming one kid. It's disgusting." I agree, it appears like this student just wants the education they deserve and the district failed to follow the processes of the Department of Education. Unfortunately, the BOE has blocked access to information on this subject.

How many years are we on the hook for a \$600k mistake? The citizens have the right to know if the special education program is being run in accordance with state special education procedures. The lack of transparency is deeply troubling.

Thank you,
Michael Dubreuil
Woodbine Road

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First Selectman

From: Taras Rudko <trudko@rudko.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 11, 2023 5:20 PM
To: Denise Turner; Rosemary Coyle; Deborah Bates; Jason LaChapelle; First Selectman; Andrea Migliaccio; Mike Egan; Mike Hayes; Art Shilosky; John Thomas; Tim Vaillancourt
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 2nd 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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First Selectman

From: First Selectman
Sent: Thursday, May 11, 2023 2:04 PM
To: Michelle Millington
Cc: Andrea Migliaccio; Art Shilosky; John Thomas; Mike Egan; Mike Hayes; Tim Vaillancourt; Denise Turner; Rosemary Coyle; Jason LaChapelle; Deborah Bates; aoliphant@colchesterct.org; Marguerite Gignac; Donna Antonacci; Rosemary Gignac; Mary Tomasi; crivers@colchesterct.org; Mary Williamson; Rachel Linkkila; Daniel Sullivan; Steven Hoffmann; Sean Shoemaker
Subject: RE: Fire Alarm System at Bacon Academy (and other schools)

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

From: Michelle Millington <mmillington@colchesterct.org>
Sent: Thursday, May 11, 2023 1:51 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; 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 night's 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> 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

From: Sean Shoemaker <firemarshal@colchesterct.gov>
Sent: Thursday, May 11, 2023 1:13 PM
To: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>
Cc: Steven Hoffmann <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

From: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>
Sent: Thursday, May 11, 2023 12:52 PM
To: Steven Hoffmann <shoffmann@ColchesterCT.gov>
Cc: Sean Shoemaker <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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First Selectman

From: Jondahl Koonankeil <jondahlmarie@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 9, 2023 6:51 PM
To: John Thomas; Art Shilosky; Mike Hayes; Tim Vaillancourt; Andreas Bisbikos; rcoyle@colchestertct.gov; Deborah Bates; Jason LaChapelle; Turner, Denise; Andrea Migliaccio; Mike Egan
Subject: Putting in my two cents...Budget Season 2023

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 your various boards. 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 Pennee Lane, Colchester

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First Selectman

From: Tricia McCourt <mccourtmom@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 4, 2023 7:34 PM
To: Denise Turner; Rosemary Coyle; Deborah Bates; Jason LaChapelle; Andreas Bisbikos
Subject: Budget

May 4, 2023

Dear Board of Selectmen,

My name is Tricia McCourt and I am both a resident and a special education kindergarten teacher at Colchester Elementary. I am deeply disappointed in the Board of Finance's decision to cut 1.3 million dollars from the education budget. Although some board of finance members feel they are being fiscally "responsible" this could not be further from the truth. The impact that this decision will have on our town will be devastating. If full day kindergarten is reduced to half day, families will be left to find childcare at the last minute. We all remember how difficult that was when our children were young. Well, it's even worse now. There are not enough childcare centers or early childhood teachers in this area to fill that gap. It was said that the Board of Education could cut costs on other line items. For years we have passed budgets with a minimal increase, even though more money was needed. Our schools have been operating with less and less each year. Six years ago I had seven paraprofessionals to support students. Today, I have one and far more students. That's just one of many examples! Each year we are told "the money just isn't there". We need to invest in this town's future now before people stop moving here, families move to more supportive communities, our house values drop, and we lose highly skilled teachers. We teach our children to take responsibility for their actions. It's time for the town to take responsibility for not adequately funding the education budget for the past several years. Just like when we don't pay our bills on time or fix minor repairs on our home, eventually the bill is due with interest and the repairs are more costly. I'm urging you to think of the long term effects that such cuts would have on our town and send the Board of Education budget back to the Board of Finance to review.

Sincerely,

Tricia McCourt

32 Blackledge Drive
Colchester, CT 06415

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First Selectman

From: Tara Young <tyoung@colchesterct.org>
Sent: Thursday, May 4, 2023 6:20 PM
To: Andreas Bisbikos; Denise Turner; Rosemary Coyle; Deborah Bates; Jason LaChapelle
Subject: Board of Education Budget

Dear Board of Selectmen,

My name is Tara Young and I am both a resident of Colchester and a kindergarten teacher at Colchester Elementary School. I am writing to you to share my disappointment and thoughts with the Board of Finance decision regarding the Board of Education budget. In this push for reducing up to 1.3 million, our students and staff will be greatly impacted. The ideas the Board of Education have presented to the Board of Finance would not have a great impact on our taxpayers. At the most recent meeting, it was evident that members of the Board of Finance were not listening to valuable points both staff and residents were presenting to them. I feel so grateful to be teaching at CES and I know I can speak for many teachers about how wonderful our school is. Full day kindergarten is needed for our young learners and should be valued.

I love Colchester and am very happy to be a part of this community. My family and I moved to this town in December of 2021. My son has been in kindergarten this year and I have a 2.5 year old daughter. I cannot imagine what it would be like for my daughter to not receive the same full day kindergarten program. My son is reading, writing and loves math. He would not have learned the amount he has if he were only in school for 2.5 hours. There is also the social and emotional element for our young learners. I know that he would have felt incredibly overwhelmed with the expectations we have in our standards if he did not receive the full day program. I worry about my daughter and our children in this community. Our children are the future and they deserve to be in a full day kindergarten program. I want to see Colchester continue to be the amazing community it is going forward. I do not want to see many people move and our young families not joining the town. That is what will happen if our program does not stay intact. Lastly, early childhood education is important for our children. A house needs a foundation and without it there is none. Early childhood is the foundation of student education. Our children need this to be successful in their future.

Respectfully,

Tara Young

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First Selectman

From: Cindy Praisner <clpraisner@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 4, 2023 3:33 PM
To: Andreas Bisbikos; Rosemary Coyle; Denise Turner; Jason LaChapelle; Deborah Bates
Subject: Budget Concerns

Hello,

I am writing as a concerned citizen. The BOF's proposed budget plan is very concerning. Though I was in favor of using the various reserve accounts to cover the \$1.7 mi of reclassified expenses of the BOE Budget, going further with additional monies from these same accounts is not fiscally responsible. The unexpended funds from the district are intended to be used for capital or emergency uses. The Capital Reserve Fund Memorandum of Agreement clearly states that "funds shall not be used for any purpose other than those [capital] listed above". Operational expenses to pay teachers to keep programs in place just pushes the fiscal cliff out for another year while draining potential funds for maintenance and emergencies. This is not fiscally responsible.

Additionally the BOF chair removed safety positions from the budget without a viable replacement plan. The current SRO and the Police Department do not support relying on this grant funding to meet the current safety needs. Moving forward without funding for the recommended safety positions leaves our town open to major liability and doesn't sufficiently keep staff and students safe. This is an unacceptable risk.

Meetings have been packed. People are speaking out and not being heard. Please let the BOF know that you will not send this budget out to referendum.

Thank you for all of your efforts,
Cindy Praisner

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First Selectman

From: Keri Blanda <keriblanda@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 4, 2023 3:29 PM
To: Andreas Bisbikos; Rosemary Coyle; Denise Turner; Jason LaChapelle; Deborah Bates
Subject: Budget concerns

Good afternoon,

I am writing to express my astonishment at the shortsightedness of Colchester's Board of Finance. The drastic recommendations they have made for the Board of Education Budget are an embarrassment to the community. I believe that young families will actively avoid our town if we do not offer full day Kindergarten. Half day Kindergarten is a relic of the past. I speak with experience as my oldest son was in one of the last half day K classes in Colchester and my two younger sons experienced the benefits of full day Kindergarten. While my older son's educational experience in Colchester ultimately set him on a path for success, I believe the full day foundation my other two sons received was superior and ultimately the best option for all school-age children in our community. Further, the cuts to the school security plan are alarming, to say the least, and the letter written by Corporal Scheel has frankly frightened me. There is an unacceptable baseline of worry that we have absorbed as a society that makes every parent worry for the safety of their children while at school, but to hear Corporal Scheel claim, with authority, that the plans "do not meet the safety/security needs of the Colchester Public Schools" puts true fear into my heart.

I understand that the Board of Selectmen has the opportunity tonight to vote against sending the current budget plans to referendum and I encourage the Board to do just that. The future of our town is at stake. Our reputation as a worthy and safe school system is at stake. We must keep working toward a better solution.

Respectfully,

Keri Blanda

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First Selectman

From: Melissa Deacon <melissajdeacon@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 4, 2023 1:03 PM
To: Tim Vaillancourt; Andrea Migliaccio; John Thomas; Mike Egan; Mike Hayes; Art Shilosky; Andreas Bisbikos; Rosemary Coyle; Denise Turner; Jason LaChapelle; Deborah Bates
Cc: BOE@colchesterct.org; dsullivan@colchesterct.org; Charles Hewes; ebutson@colchesterct.org; jomeara@colchesterct.org; cbennett@colchesterct.org; abegue@colchesterct.org; aoliphant@colchesterct.org; crivers@colchesterct.org; Heather Petit; MikeSink20@gmail.com; mtomasi@colchesterct.org; rgignac@colchesterct.org; rlinkkila@colchesterct.org; mmillington@colchesterct.org; dantonacci@colchesterct.org; 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?
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-
-
- 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.

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-
- 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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First Selectman

From: First Selectman
Sent: Thursday, May 4, 2023 12:58 PM
To: Laurie Buyniski; Andreas Bisbikos; Rosemary Coyle; Deborah Bates; jlachapelle@colchestct.gov; Denise Turner
Subject: RE: Concerns for the Board of Education Budget

Hi Laurie,

Thank you for reaching out. The BOE Budget will not be on tonight's agenda as the process requires one more public hearing.

Sincerely,

Andreas

From: Laurie Buyniski <lauriebuyniski@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 4, 2023 11:40 AM
To: Andreas Bisbikos <abisbikos@colchesterct.gov>; Rosemary Coyle <rcoyle@colchesterct.gov>; Deborah Bates <dBates@colchesterct.gov>; jlachapelle@colchestct.gov; Denise Turner <dturner@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: Concerns for the Board of Education Budget

Good morning,

I am a parent of four young children and I have rearranged my schedule for the past months to attend more than 10 budget related meetings and workshops. I have become thoroughly educated on the budget process. By engaging in the meetings, I have learned the importance of citizens expressing their questions and concerns throughout the budget process.

Unfortunately, what I have found is that the members of the Board of Finance are not listening. It has been extremely frustrating. I am invested in our town and schools and care deeply about making good decisions for the future. We moved here 12 years ago in order to provide the best upbringing possible for our children. Their education is paramount.

I understand that you will be presented with the Board of Education budget tonight and I am requesting that you reject it and send the budget back for further consideration. It is vital that \$500k is added back to the bottom line. The strategy of using unexpended funds to cover costs in next year's budget is worse than risky. It is reckless. The Board of Finance is suggesting that the funds are drained to cover teacher's salaries, and that the security plan for school is cut altogether. Adding back just \$500k would save crucial programs that affect families, teachers and our entire Colchester community.

Meeting after meeting citizens have expressed their desire to keep funding in the school budget and that they would willingly pay the resulting tax cost, which is a reasonable ask. Board of Finance members are ignoring them.

I am requesting that you **do not** move the budget forward to referendum until the needs of the school district are properly addressed.

Please feel free to contact me if I can provide any further information or explanation.

Sincerely,
Laurie Buyniski
44 Brookstone Drive
860 392-9299

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First Selectman

From: Erin C. Kaiser <ecurran313@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 3, 2023 4:17 PM
To: First Selectman; Rosemary Coyle; dturner@colchesterct.gov; Deborah Bates; Jason LaChapelle
Cc: Michael Kaiser
Subject: proposed education budget 2023-2024

Dear Board of Selectmen,

My name is Erin Kaiser and I am both a resident of Colchester and an employee of the Board of Education. I am writing to you to express my dissatisfaction with the Board of Finance decision to push forward an education budget with upwards of 1.3 million dollars in reductions. Aside from the creative measures taken by both boards to fund one time expenses, the further reductions are catastrophic to our school system. There were several scenarios presented by the BOE to the BOF which would have had minimal impact to the taxpayers in Colchester. And yet the BOF pushed forward the harshest cuts with the largest impacts. I implore you to send this education budget back to the BOF with additional funding reallocated back to the school system. It is clear that the BOF did not truly consider the will of the taxpayers, as was indicated by their mockery of the citizens during their comments. Many of the BOF members were smirking and rolling their eyes during citizen comments, eating snacks as if at a movie, and passing notes back and forth between each other, including our first selectman. I am horrified and embarrassed at their insensitive behaviors towards community members.

I am in FULL support of the original budget that Dan Sullivan and the BOE presented at 9.83%. Frankly, I would be in full support of a 14% increase if it meant retaining programming and staff positions.

We MUST invest in our community, whether it is education or social services for our community members.

Respectfully,
Erin Kaiser

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First Selectman

From: Rosemary Coyle
Sent: Tuesday, May 16, 2023 10:11 AM
To: First Selectman
Cc: Denise Turner; Deborah Bates; Jason LaChapelle
Subject: Fw: Town Budget
Attachments: town_meeting_7-7-2021_proposed_budget_2021-2022_-_condensed_version.pdf;
fund_balance_policy.pdf; boe_capital_reserve_fund_-_resolution.pdf

This was never put in correspondence. Since I added to my original email, please include the entire email for this meeting's correspondence. See note below in green.

Thank you,
Rosemary

From: Rosemary Coyle <rcoyle@colchesterct.gov>
Sent: Friday, May 5, 2023 3:37 PM
To: 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>; First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>
Cc: Denise Turner <dturner@colchesterct.gov>; Deborah Bates <dBates@colchesterct.gov>; Jason LaChapelle <jLaChapelle@colchesterct.gov>; Daniel Sullivan <dsullivan@colchesterct.org>; boe@colchesterct.org <boe@colchesterct.org>; Mary Williamson <mwilliamson@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: Re: Town Budget

Please do not respond to all.

Andrea,

I have attended every BOF meeting since the budget process began. Much of the information you post during the meetings isn't shared to Boards and citizens. Documents that are used at meetings should be posted on the website after meetings for the public to view. At the last BOF meeting you provided a document on screen share that you have not provided to the Boards or the citizens of Colchester. Please share that document with all of us so we may understand your proposal better for the budget. Also why are there no BOF minutes posted since April 4th? FOI requires minutes to be posted within seven days.

It is now May 5th and as far back as March 26th, I requested that the BOF and the First Selectman provide to the citizens of Colchester a budget in the format required by Charter (see below) that the citizens of Colchester could understand and follow with all the information in one place. I have once again attached the normal Town Meeting document that is provided to the citizens of Colchester at public hearing and Town meeting. Sending two numbers to the BOS and asking the BOS to recommend to Town Meeting and the citizens, a set of numbers without the required back up information is in violation of our Charter.

Your funding of the BOE through a mixture of cuts and assigned and unassigned dollars has not been clearly presented to the Boards or citizens in any written format for the public to understand. From what I understand about your conversation with the auditors the \$695,000 is part of the \$1.4 million assigned fund balance. Some of that \$1.4 million should have been put into the BOE capital reserve

account on a regular basis at the end of the year by your policy (attached) but never was. The auditor could not verify the number in the assigned fund balance because the last time it was audited was 2021 and he has not completed the 2022-2023 audit. A separate question I have is where did the funds come from to address the \$290,000 oil spill. Were those deducted from the \$1.4 million? I am concerned that you want the BOE to use all of their fund balance to pay for operational expenses and leave them with no reserve for emergencies.

I am also concerned about our use of undesignated fund balance (policy attached). Please provide the Boards and the citizens with an accounting of all the funds you are removing from our undesignated fund balance, that is made up of many individual funds, as part of the budget. What is the current percentage of the fund balance? If the fund balance is in the High Confidence Zone (above 15%), it requires BOS concurrence. If it is in the **High Confidence Zone A 12-15%**, the money may only be used for specific purposes and if the expenditures bring the fund balance below 10%, it needs BOS approval and a BOF plan to raise the fund balance back up. In the June, 2021 audit the fund balance was at 13.97% (*"At year end, the unassigned fund balance for the general fund was \$7,831,625 or 13.97% of total general fund budgetary basis expenditures and transfers out."*). Since last year's budget was overspent, we have no audit, and we've allocated items from the fund balance last year and this, I'm concerned at where we are and that we can't be any higher than the high confidence zone trending down. Can you provide any accounting to give us an idea of the zone we are in at the present time by giving us a list of all deductions we've made from fund balance in the last two years?

HIGH CONFIDENCE ZONE B (UFB above 15% of annual operating expenditures)

If the Unassigned Fund Balance is in the High Confidence Zone above 15%, then the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance shall identify for taxpayers possible future purposes for this money. The funds may be used for supplemental appropriations or as revenue

HIGH CONFIDENCE ZONE A (UFB 12% to 15% of annual operating expenditures)

If the Unassigned Fund Balance is in the High Confidence Zone of 12% to 15%, then the UFB may be used for a supplemental appropriation to fund capital projects, repayment of debt if permissible, transfers to other funds, and/or other one-time items.

On a personal note, as a former educator, I am horrified on how you are choosing to decimate the educational programs in our town. When you cut the budget so severely, you create the hole that forces such choices. You had an opportunity to compromise and you chose not to listen to the citizens of this town. Since we have no 22-23 audit, we don't actually know how much money is in our fund balance or the percentage.

Please address these issues prior to sending any budget on to the BOS so we have the information to send to the citizens at town meeting.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns,
Rosemary Coyle
Selectman

From: Rosemary Coyle

Sent: Sunday, March 26, 2023 4:56 PM

To: 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>; First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>

Cc: Denise Turner <dturner@colchesterct.gov>; Deborah Bates <dBates@colchesterct.gov>; Jason LaChapelle <jLaChapelle@colchesterct.gov>; Mary Stevens (mstevens14@comcast.net) <mstevens14@comcast.net>

Subject: Town Budget

Please do not respond to all. **Please include in correspondence for the BOF and BOS. (This was not done.)**

At the BOF meeting of 3/21/23, the BOF requested additional information from the BOE concerning the format of the provided information.

My question is why are we not asking for the same information from the Town Budget? Proposed Town budget documents always provided actuals spent over multiple years, department requests and then the proposed budget. You could track any changes and reductions made within departments and on individual line items. The BOS and the BOF always received complete budget binders with all the information. An abbreviated version of the document was then available to the public at all the hearings and public meetings on the budget. I have attached the abbreviated document that went to public hearings in 21-22. (This document is available on the Town website by searching proposed 21-22 budget.)

Without this kind of line-by-line comparison, the budget and adjustments are not transparent and it is impossible to make good decisions concerning additions and deletions to the Town Budget. As was said at your meeting by one of your members - "need a line-by-line breakout that we can do a comparison".

Not only should you be asking for this information, the Charter in article 1105 requires the format presented in the attached document - B. (2) "... a summary of each department's proposed budget with a comparison of the amount budgeted in the current fiscal year, (3) ...a summary of each department's proposed budget and the amount estimated to be actually expended in the current fiscal year."

Since the Charter only refers to the budget as the Board of Selectman budget, in order for the BOS and BOF to do their diligence before moving a budget forward to Town Meeting this additional information is critical. You may find the references to the BOS budget in the following articles: C-402 I, C-601 C.(1), C-1105a. C, C(2), and E, and C-1106a.

Your attention to these matters is appreciated.

Thank you,
Rosemary Coyle, Selectman