

First Selectman

From: Michael Dubreuil <dubreuilm@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, June 30, 2023 8:54 AM
To: First Selectman; Rosemary Coyle; Deborah Bates; Denise Turner; Jason LaChapelle; BOE@colchesterct.org; Andrea Migliaccio; Mike Egan; Tim Vaillancourt; John Thomas; Art Shilosky; Mike Hayes
Subject: Out-of-District Tuition

All,
Please read the below email and include it in correspondence for the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and Board of Education. It raises questions that cross all boards and may require input from the town attorney.

To support the 2023 to 2024 budget season the BOE commissioned a report on projected school enrollment. This document is called "[Colchester Public Schools Enrollment Projected to 2032](#)", was authored by Peter M. Prowda, PhD, and dated January 27, 2023. In the document, the enrollment for the 2023 to 2024 school year is projected to be 2,210 students.

On [February 23, 2023](#) the BOE adopted a budget for the 2023 to 2024 school year of \$46,157,862. Therefore, given their enrollment projection, they have proposed a per pupil expenditure of approximately \$20,886.

On [June 13, 2023](#) the BOE set the out-of-district tuition cost for the 2023-2024 school year at \$12,900 per student. Therefore, giving non-Colchester students an almost \$8 thousand dollar discount, or approximately 40%.

The June 13, 2023 meeting minutes note the following, "Mr. Sullivan [the superintendent] believes it is valuable to the Board to reevaluate the cost of tuition in regard to help bring in more students to the district as well as a benefit to staff who send their students to Colchester schools."

As a citizen, I have no issue with the town of Colchester offering the benefit of no-cost school tuition for the children of employees of the town. This should be relatively non-controversial.

What I don't understand is how it benefits the taxpayers of Colchester to "bring in more students to the district" at a discounted rate. It would seem to increase the budget required to operate the Colchester school system with no discernible benefit to the citizens of Colchester. To put it simply, I have a major issue subsidizing the cost of education for citizens of other towns.

I think it's highly controversial to offer such a large discount to other towns while the BOE is in conflict with the BOF on their massive budget request. When we're discussing the positive impacts \$200k could have on the school budget, that's also the cost of 25 out-of-district students at \$8k lost per student. Frankly, this seems like madness.

The questions the BOE's actions raise are as follows:

A.) Under what authority does the BOE have to set the out-of-district tuition? (town charter, state law, usurped power)

B.) Given the fact that the tuition rate has an effect on the budget, why is the tuition rate not approved by the BOF?

C.) Is it lawful to provide a significantly discounted tuition rate (outside an employee benefit) to the residents of other towns at the expense of Colchester citizens? As a citizen, I feel my rights are being violated.

Thank you,
Michael Dubreuil
Woodbine Road

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First Selectman

From: Robert Peter <rnppeter@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Wednesday, June 28, 2023 12:52 PM
To: First Selectman; Rosemary Coyle; Deborah Bates; Jason LaChapelle; Denise Turner; Joseph Leone; Gayle Furman
Subject: Board of Selectmen - Sewer & Water Commission agenda item request

Good Afternoon Selectmen,

As interim chairman of the Sewer & Water Commission, I kindly request including an agenda item that addresses Sewer & Water Commission member, Ron Silberman's renewal.

His term expires June 30, 2023 so I hope his active status continues and can be confirmed during your upcoming July 6, 2023 regular meeting.

If there's additional information required from the Commission or myself, please do not hesitate to ask. Thank you for your dedication and consideration to our Town and on this matter.

Sincerely,
Robert Peter

231 Carli Blvd
Colchester, CT 06415
203 537-1090
rnppeter@sbcglobal.net

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First Selectman

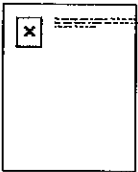
From: Steven Hoffmann
Sent: Thursday, June 22, 2023 6:06 PM
To: Deborah Bates; First Selectman; Rosemary Coyle; Denise Turner; Jason LaChapelle; Andrea Migliaccio; Art Shilosky; Tim Vaillancourt; Mike Hayes; Mike Egan; John Thomas
Cc: Michael Sinkewicz
Subject: Re: 24-7 Coverage Joint Press Release

Good Evening All,

Just for a point of clarification, the process for hiring career firefighter/EMTs does not happen overnight. The additional coverage we are looking to institute requires negotiations with the Union based on working condition changes since it affects their schedule. The Union has made mention of some items they are looking for, which could result in further document development and ultimate approval by the BOS. At the very least, an MOU would need to be approved for the aggregable terms with the Union by the BOS. I have spoken with the FS and we are starting this process now in order to be ready to go when the town makes a final determination on the path forward. In the interim, we continue to provide the needed coverage on overtime, which ultimately will result in continued increased overtime costs. Any questions feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,

Steven Hoffmann
Fire Chief
Colchester Fire & EMS



(o) 860-537-2512
(c) 860-705-9382
shoffmann@colchesterct.gov

From: Deborah Bates <dBates@colchesterct.gov>
Sent: Thursday, June 22, 2023 5:20:58 PM
To: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>; Rosemary Coyle <rcoyle@colchesterct.gov>; Denise Turner <dturner@colchesterct.gov>; Jason LaChapelle <jLaChapelle@colchesterct.gov>; Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>
Cc: Michael Sinkewicz <mikesink20@gmail.com>; Steven Hoffmann <shoffmann@ColchesterCT.gov>
Subject: Re: 24-7 Coverage Joint Press Release

Hi Andreas,

These are budgeted items and the budget has not passed, how are we paying for these employees?

Safety in our town is paramount, however we do not have a passes budget!

All the best,

Debbie

From: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>

Sent: Thursday, June 22, 2023 3:20 PM

To: Rosemary Coyle <rcoyle@colchesterct.gov>; Denise Turner <dturner@colchesterct.gov>; Deborah Bates <dBates@colchesterct.gov>; Jason LaChapelle <jLaChapelle@colchesterct.gov>; Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>

Cc: Michael Sinkewicz <mikesink20@gmail.com>; Steven Hoffmann <shoffmann@ColchesterCT.gov>

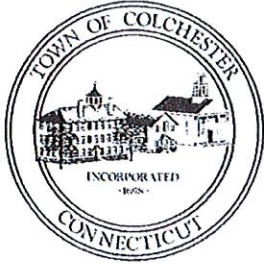
Subject: 24-7 Coverage Joint Press Release

To the BOS & BOF,

Please see the Joint Statement from the First Selectman and Fire Chief on moving forward with the hiring of 2 additional firefighters/EMT despite a failed referendum. I am sure that we all agree that the safety of our community is paramount.

Sincerely,

Andreas Bisbikos
First Selectman



Town of Colchester, Connecticut

127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, Connecticut 06415

Andreas Bisbikos, First Selectman

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Dear Colchester Residents,

Establishing 24/7 coverage in Colchester by hiring two additional career firefighters/EMT personnel is paramount. With the significant increase in call volume, the need to have staffed personnel is essential in ensuring that an immediate response is rendered alongside our dedicated volunteers. The decline of volunteer personnel turnout, mainly for emergency medical responses, resulted in increased overtime costs to staff the weekends with career firefighter/EMT personnel. With the Town's proposed budget relatively flat from last fiscal year, we feel confident in moving forward with the hiring of two additional firefighters/EMT personnel despite a failed referendum.

With the decline in volunteers, it is imperative that local government recognizes and identifies that the growing need for adequate staffing to support calls for service is critical to emergency service delivery. We recognize the very important and crucial role our volunteers play in the emergency services in Colchester. As a combination department, the continued success and sustainability of this model is only possible with the continued support of volunteers from the community joining, training, and responding to emergency call requests. Colchester Fire & Emergency Medical Services leadership continues to monitor national trends, recommendations and evaluates internal policies and processes to provide for increased attraction of citizens to volunteer for the department. While the decline in volunteers may reflect a national trend, we are committed to being proactive in our solutions.

If you are looking for an exciting experience that not only provides individual growth but also offers an essential service to the community, consider joining Colchester Fire & Emergency Medical Services. We are constantly looking for new folks to join the volunteer ranks. Please contact Fire Headquarters at 860-537-2512 with any questions. An application to join is located on the town website under the Fire Department. If you are interested in joining this great team, please complete the application and return it to Fire Headquarters, located at 52 Old Hartford Rd.

Sincerely,

Andreas Bisbikos
First Selectman

Steven Hoffmann
Fire Chief

First Selectman

From: First Selectman
Sent: Saturday, June 17, 2023 10:29 AM
To: Melissa Deacon; Jason LaChapelle; Rosemary Coyle; Deborah Bates; Denise Turner
Subject: RE: Questions

Hi Melissa,

On the Email with the Lists

1. There will be no investigation.
2. According to Mr. LaChapelle, it was leaked to him by someone within the DTC or closely connected to.
3. The debate related to the Citizens Comments List can be reviewed here:
<https://www.colchesterct.gov/home/events/118551>
4. I will also be issuing my statement on the Citizens Comments List as part of the minutes.

On Immediate Concerns

1. Everything on the recent Board of Selectmen Agenda needed to be addressed.

On the Budget

1. The Board of Selectmen have zero authority on the either the Town Budget or the Education Budget, it is squarely in the hands of the Board of Finance
2. I have had frequent communications with members of the Board of Finance on next steps, especially related to the Town Budget
3. With the Town Budget failing, the Town is in a very strong position to move forward with operations and initiatives as the Town Budget was relatively flat from one year to the next. Nothing will stop the progress that is already in motion.
4. With the Education Budget, that is not in my jurisdiction – however, there have been ideas discussed related to next steps. The Board of Finance Chair is vetting those ideas before presenting anything. The next Board of Finance meeting will be Wednesday, June 28th.

Sincerely,

Andreas Bisbikos
First Selectman

From: Melissa Deacon <melissajdeacon@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, June 16, 2023 10:14 AM

To: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>; Jason LaChapelle <jLaChapelle@colchesterct.gov>; Rosemary Coyle <rcoyle@colchesterct.gov>; Deborah Bates <dBates@colchesterct.gov>; Denise Turner <dturner@colchesterct.gov>

Subject: Questions

Good morning First Selectman and Board of Selectmen Members,

Unfortunately I was unable to attend last night's meeting, but I have a few questions regarding this investigation.

1. How was the email obtained in the first place?

2. If the email was from July 8, 2022 - why is it only coming to light now?
3. What is the issue in making a list of people that have different views? Who is to say republicans aren't watching the videos of the meetings and making lists? There are databases for everything - how is this any different?
4. Were the individuals on this list harassed in any way?

Also, aren't there more immediate concerns the board of selectmen should be focusing on? As of June 1, 2023 the state increased minimum wage to \$15/hour, which from my understanding is not in the budget. How are those employees going to be paid?

As stated on the town website - "The purpose of the Board is to manage and oversee the internal operations of the Town. The Board of Selectmen oversees all Town Departments, Boards and Commissions and any office the Board fills by appointment." (Source - <https://www.colchesterct.gov/board-selectmen>)

If your purpose is to manage and oversee the other boards, shouldn't more time be spent on working with the Board of Finance to come up with a solution to the current budget issues and concerns of the town? The Board of Selectmen works as an advisory board to the board of finance and board of education so why not work with both boards to reach a compromise?

Isn't anyone else curious as to how the BOF even came up with the reduction of \$1.3 million to the BOE budget or why they added money to the town budget? What calculations did they use? How do they figure out what Colchester citizens can afford? Since the BOS oversees the BOF, shouldn't the BOS be aware and knowledgeable how the BOF arrives at the budgets? Not involved in the process, but at least be able to know how they arrived at their recommendations?

I am trying to figure out how all this works and understand everyone's role.

Any information you are able to provide would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Melissa Deacon
White Oak Dr
Colchester

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First Selectman

From: Jennifer Sevigny <jenny.glieco@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 29, 2023 5:36 PM
To: Art Shilosky; Andrea Migliaccio; John Thomas; Mike Egan; Mike Hayes; First Selectman; Tim Vaillancourt
Subject: Budget discussions

To the Board of Finance and First Selectman,

I wanted to send a message following last night's meeting. To begin, I apologize for allowing my emotions to get the best of me during the meeting last night. I allowed my frustration at what is happening to take over and I apologize if I came off as rude or disrespectful. That was not my intent. Do not think that my disagreement with you is a lack of appreciation for the work you do. Our disagreement in what the budgets should be does not mean we do not recognize the work that goes into this. That being said, rude and unkind comments were also made by board members. Not only do townspeople need to maintain decorum, but you do as well.

Concerning discussions last night, I would reiterate that it is not your personal decision how to set the budgets. We are here because despite repeated public comments requesting a higher budget, a low budget was put forth and those who voted clearly stated it was too low on both the town and education sides. One member of the board stated during the meeting that we can't accept the results of the referendum due to low voter turnout but again, the same comment would not be made had it been voted too high. This turnout was higher than others through the years and the others were not questioned. This was a fair and free referendum that all could participate in. We cannot presume to know how those who did not vote would have voted. While you disagree with the results, they are what they are and you represent those who voted as they did and now need to make decisions accordingly even if you don't agree. I thank the Board Chair for recognizing in the meeting that this was a fair referendum.

I do appreciate that the Board of Finance Chair (and Art!) offered an increase of \$100,000 and followed the advisory question results. While I do not believe that is enough, I appreciate the willingness to follow the vote and play ball. That being said, when there was clear indication on behalf of the crowd that this was not enough of an increase, the response was to threaten to send it to referendum like this, remove the advisory question and then cut it if it fails. This was further exacerbated by the indication that voting "no/too low" was a fad or something that is just silly. People voted as they did because there was no choice left to have our concerns listened to. That is the purpose of voting. Your threatening to take away the power of the voters is incredibly concerning.

I was glad to hear that you were open to ways of better funding the town. I am hoping you will take into consideration the comments made by John last night (my apologies for not knowing his last name). He shared candidly with you that he is understaffed, overworked, overwhelmed and underpaid. He also shared that this is across the board in our town and that we lose good people to other towns due to such low salaries. I included the first selectman on this email due to this.

The statement that there will be a surplus this year and that his budget was based on talking with supervisors is concerning based on the comments made that seem to paint a very different picture. I implore all of you to discuss possibilities for raising salaries and/or providing staff to the teams who need it.

When it comes to the Board of Education budget I would respectfully request the increase to the board of education be a higher number, as was suggested by Mike and Mike, of \$300,000-325,000 to allow the board of Ed to reinstate particular programming and educators. Investing in our educators and the course offerings is a benefit to students. This is a small increase to the initial referendum number and would allow for the maintenance of some of the programs on the chopping block. I thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Jennifer Sevigny
Berry lane
Colchester

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