

1 of 17

Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Sun 3/19/2023 10:07 PM

To: **Boards & Commissions** <b-c@colchesterct.gov>

Correspondence

Attached to March 22, BOF Regular Meeting

1 of 17

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

From: Michael Dubreuil <dubreuilm@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, February 24, 2023 10:06 AM

To: Margo Gignac <mgignac@colchesterct.org>

Cc: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; BOE@colchesterct.org <BOE@colchesterct.org>

Subject: Re: [BOE] February 23rd BOE Workshop

Margo,

Thank you for the article. "Unless a vote is unanimous, the vote must be held by roll call."

I remember the motion, a second to the motion, and then "all in favor say aye". I don't recall a "those opposed" vote. But again, the audio quality was pretty bad.

At the time of that vote, I texted another citizen and said "where's the roll call?" I'm unclear if anyone was opposed to the motion or if anyone abstained.

- Mike

On Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 7:49 AM Margo Gignac <mgignac@colchesterct.org> wrote:

<http://seccog.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Virtual-Meeting-White-Paper.pdf>

On Thu, Feb 23, 2023 at 8:57 PM Margo Gignac <mgignac@colchesterct.org> wrote:

Dear Mr Dubreuil,

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.

Best regards,

Margo Gignac
Secretary, Colchester Board of Education

On Thu, Feb 23, 2023 at 8:52 PM Michael Dubreuil <dubreuilm@gmail.com> wrote:

All,

I just attended the BOE February 23rd Budget Workshop. I believe I just witnessed the worst hybrid meeting I've ever attended. The audio and video were both terrible.

First, as a hybrid meeting my understanding is that any motion for action needs a roll call. The motion to approve sending the budget to the Board of Finance was done without a roll call. I have no idea who supported it, who opposed it and who abstained. That vote should be considered void.

Second, there should have been a second opportunity for citizens' comments. That didn't happen.

All in all, a terribly run meeting. I have attached my first citizen's comment below.

- Mike

Michael Dubreuil
180 Woodbine Road

At last night's Board of Finance I may have made some provocative comments to earn me a personal invitation to this meeting. I was told I need to educate myself. To be clear, I have actually read every budget document on the website. For example, the CES document states the Assistant Principal has the Principal as a direct report; which seems odd to me. Anyway, I feel I need to educate the Board of Education.

If you're a Republican on this board you were elected for two reasons: #1, to block Democrat efforts to institute their ideology in the classroom and #2, to control spending.

What's never reflected in any budget presentation is what has actually been happening at the Board of Ed. For years they have been building an empire. An empire that duplicates many of the functions of the town. Add in Public Works and a tax collector and the Board of Ed could operate completely separate from the town. The Board of Ed's duplication of town functions is unnecessary and wasteful.

Republicans need to show strength and embrace our core principles; fiscal conservatism and efficiency. This Board of Ed needs to hold the Superintendent to a budget decrease. Yes, we're going to hear about cuts to teachers and athletics. It's all scare tactics to maintain the empire.

It's a waste of everyone's time discussing a 9% increase because there is no chance that it will pass referendum. Put simply: we don't believe you.

Thank you.

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Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Sun 3/19/2023 10:08 PM

To: **Boards & Commissions** <b-c@colchesterct.gov>

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

From: Michael Dubreuil <dubreuilm@gmail.com>

Sent: Sunday, February 26, 2023 5:25 PM

To: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Cc: BOE@colchesterct.org <BOE@colchesterct.org>

Subject: BOF March 7th Correspondence

Please add this to the correspondence for the March 7, 2023 meeting.

To the Board of Finance,

At the February 22, 2023 Board of Finance meeting I made a comment that “the Board of Ed should have directed the Superintendent to shoot for a 10% decrease.” After my comment a member of the Board of Education used citizen comment to welcome me to attend a Board budget workshop and become educated. I did in fact attend that meeting, and I am still unclear on why the Board of Education’s proposed budget is as high as it is.

I think some people may think that a 10% decrease is unreasonable- maybe even crazy. However, I have data and analysis that backs up that request. Let’s educate the Board of Education...

For the past several years we have heard grumblings from fiscal conservatives that student enrollment is down and costs are up. That sentiment may be accurate and the only way to determine this is by analyzing per student costs. In this paper I will do that.

Often the Board of Education attempts to project the future; for example, estimating future student enrollment. They don’t typically present a retrospective of the past; using only the previous year’s budget as guidance. In this paper we will look back 10 years to 2013. (Interesting side note: BOF member, Michael Egan, was on the Board of Education that year)

One of the Board of Education’s budget documents was the [DRG D Per Pupil Expenditure & Median Income](#) document. It includes a “Median Income vs Area Districts” graph. There isn’t a raw number provided for median income; however the number appears to be above \$100k. I believe the source of the number is the US Census Bureau and represents median household income. For 2021, the latest year data is available, the actual number is \$104,527. I don’t want to draw motivations or intent from the Board providing this data. However, I would note that many senior citizens and individuals on fixed incomes would find that number high. That’s OK, because in my analysis I’ll use the rate of increase for median household income; which I think most people would find reasonable.

In 2013, the median household income was \$96,774. The rate of household income increase from 2013 to 2021 was 8%. This time period only represents 8 years and I'd like to base my analysis on 10 years. Therefore, I'll extrapolate the 1% increase per year. In the past 10 years, the rate of household median income has increased 10%.

In 2013 the Board of Education adopted a budget of \$39,076,054 and enrolled 2,733 students. Therefore, the cost to educate each student was \$14,298.

In 2023 the Board of Education proposed a budget of \$46,157,862 and enrolled 2,210 students. Therefore, the cost to educate each student would be \$20,886. From 2013, this represents a 46% increase in the cost to educate each student.

The Board of Education has proposed to raise the cost of educating each student by 46%, when our household incomes have only risen 10%. That seems like an incredibly high increase per student that I haven't found justification for. Let's perform some hypothetical analysis if the Board of Education budget stayed neutral or was decreased.

In 2022 the Board of Education adopted a budget of \$42,025,701. If they maintained the same budget in 2023, the cost to educate each student would be \$19,016. From 2013, this represents a 33% increase in the cost to educate each student. Again, our household incomes have only risen 10% during that time; therefore, the increase is still not within parity of median household income.

Let's assume a 10% decrease from the 2022 adopted budget. The new budget would be \$37,823,131. The cost to educate each student would be \$17,115. From 2013, this represents a 20% increase in the cost to educate each student. Again, our household incomes have only risen 10% during that time; therefore the increase per student is still double our household incomes.

As an interesting comparison, let's examine the final budget if the cost to educate each student only rises at the same rate as our household incomes. In 2023, the cost to educate each student would be \$15,728. The total Board of Education budget would be \$34,758,100. That new total budget number represents a 17% decrease from the 2022 budget. No one is asking for that type of decrease; however, it would be entirely reasonable. The citizens could demand the Board of Education start from this number and justify any increase. What's absurd is the proposed 2023 budget is more than \$11 million dollars higher than this. Can the Board of Education justify \$11 million dollars in excess spending?

The Board of Education likes to justify their high student education costs with comparison to other towns. Typically these districts are selected to demonstrate that Colchester falls within the average. However, comparisons with other districts have limited value. All our parents used to tell us, "If all your friends jumped off a bridge, would you do it, too?" That's the level of justification the Board of Education provides for our hard earned tax dollars.

My understanding is the Board of Education has received numerous grants in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The intent of these grants is for a temporary increase in spending to accelerate "learning recovery" as a result of government response to COVID-19. This is why the Board's current spending level is so high compared to their actual adopted 2022-2023 budget. It appears they would like to make

the temporary spending permanent. I think as citizens we need more clarification on this. Why does a spending increase that was intended to be temporary need to become permanent? Did “learning recovery” fail?

The Board of Education is proposing a 46% increase in per student costs over the past decade. That increase can't be justified by the increase in teachers salaries; the increase of certified salaries (teachers) is 13% over that period. There is clearly something else happening within the Colchester Public Schools system. Vague hand waving to tuition or special education increases can't resolve the discrepancy. This needs to be explained. I'm a person with empathy; however, we can't continue to justify this level of spending with emotion.

The Board of Finance operates on logic, facts, and data. As I have explained above, it's reasonable for the Board of Finance to hold the Board of Education to a 10% decrease. It's double what the citizens, who pay for the Board of Education's budget, have gained in income during that time. If that's not the solution, then I look forward to the Board of Education providing clarity on why costs have escalated 5 times our income in the past decade.

Sincerely,
Michael Dubreuil
180 Woodbine Road, Colchester

Data Sources:

Student Enrollment Data:

[Colchester Public Schools Enrollment Projected to 2032](#); Total Enrollment; Page 5

2013: 2,733 students

2022: 2,229 students

2023: 2,210 students

Economic Data:

[United States Census Bureau](#); Colchester town, New London County, Connecticut; S1903 MEDIAN INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS; Median Household Income

2013: \$96,774

2021 (latest year of data): \$104,527

Budget Data:

[COLCHESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION ADOPTED BUDGET 2013-2014](#); Page 2-5

FY 2013-2014 Adopted Budget Grand Total: \$39,076,054

[2023 - 2024 Board of Education Adopted Budget](#); PDF Page 8

2022-2023 Adopted Budget Grand Total: \$42,025,701

2023-2024 Budget Grand Total: \$46,157,862

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Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Sun 3/19/2023 10:08 PM

To: Boards & Commissions <b-c@colchesterct.gov>

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

From: Michael Dubreuil <dubreuilm@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 8:49 PM
To: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Cc: BOE@colchesterct.org <BOE@colchesterct.org>
Subject: Re: BOF March 7th Correspondence

To the Board of Finance,

I believe in full transparency and admitting to making mistakes. I made a mistake in my analysis. The specific sentence I made a mistake on was "That increase can't be justified by the increase in teachers salaries; the increase of certified salaries (teachers) is 13% over that period."

The problem with that sentence is I didn't normalize the salary increase with the decrease in student enrollment. When normalized the actual increase in teacher's salaries is approximately 40%. I think my previous analysis may have trivialized the impact of staffing in the school system budget.

I have two children in the school system. I have never had a bad interaction with a Colchester Public Schools employee (except the Superintendent). They are all great people. Therefore, this next part is difficult to write.

One person I admire is the father of the US Nuclear Navy, Admiral Hyman G. Rickover. His leadership principles have guided us for decades. I think this statement is applicable in our situation: "Another principle for managing a successful program is to resist the natural human inclination to hope things will work out, despite evidence or doubt to the contrary. It is not easy to admit that what you thought was correct did not turn out that way. If conditions require it, one must face the facts and brutally make needed changes despite considerable costs and schedule delays. The man in charge must personally set the example in this area."

Staff	FY 13/14	FY 22/23	Comparison	
			Increase/Decrease	Percent Change
Total Certified	255.56	246.8	-8.76	-3%
Total Classified/Non-Certified	158.8	173.28	14.48	9%
TOTAL	414.36	420.08	5.72	1%
Enrolled Students	2,733	2,229	-504	-18%

There's been an 18% decrease in students; however, we've actually increased total staff. There's been a minor decrease in teachers (certified staff) and a significant increase in other staff.

I think when you face facts- we have a lot of staff for significantly fewer students. We haven't made an attempt to reduce staff as the number of students has decreased. I think there's an argument to be made that parents prefer smaller class sizes. However, that needs to be balanced against the wishes of the larger community to reduce taxes; many of whom didn't and wouldn't personally benefit from the small classroom sizes. A large contingent of citizens would like to see the Board of Education's budget reduced. I reluctantly have to admit, we may need brutal changes in staffing to seek the changes the citizens demand.

My personal opinion is that I was surprised to see the number of non-teachers increase, while the number of teachers stayed roughly the same. I'm not an expert, I can't offer advice on whether the current ratio of teachers to non-teachers is correct or not. The Board of Education needs to provide clarity in this area.

There is text in the teacher's contract with a goal to cap the maximum number of students per teacher (See Comment #1 below). However, the Board's data, in general, indicates that we aren't close to reaching those caps. I think the Board of Education should provide analysis on scenarios where the number of teachers are reduced.

I'm going to paraphrase from memory a comment the Superintendent made at the workshop: "we're not particularly top heavy, compared to other districts we're not the highest and not the lowest." I think the problem is we are just heavy everywhere. It's going to take cuts in many areas to achieve the desired cost savings.

In my previous email I made reference to increased costs due to COVID-19. That there was some type of "learning recovery" that had caused a temporary increase in spending. What I found while trying to understand this was truly wild. Here's my findings:

Staff	FY 16/17	FY 17/18	FY 18/19	FY 19/20	FY 20/21	FY 21/22	FY 22/23
Total Certified	244.72	244.52	246.27	243.67	244.4	245.33	246.8
Total Classified/Non-Certified	164.13	160.88	167	165.7	165.33	167.33	173.28
TOTAL	408.85	405.4	413.27	409.37	409.73	412.66	420.08
Enrolled Students	2,426	2,438	2,311	2,312	2,185	2,216	2,229
Adopted Budget	\$ 39,705,064	\$ 40,268,505	\$ 40,549,344	\$ 41,237,122	\$ 41,316,610	\$ 41,827,055	\$ 42,025,701
Actual Expenditures (Town Reported)	\$ 46,630,541	\$ 47,020,602	\$ 43,249,066	\$ 46,584,807	\$ 46,211,815	?	?
Expenditures - Adopted Budget	\$ 6,925,477	\$ 6,752,097	\$ 2,699,722	\$ 5,347,685	\$ 4,895,205	?	?
Actual Expenditures (BOE Reported)	\$ 39,518,416	\$ 39,659,108	\$ 40,367,299	\$ 41,262,496	\$ 40,960,989	?	?

There are two actual expenditure rows. One row includes data that was extracted from the Town Budget reports. The second row was extracted from historical Board of Education budget reports. The "?" represents data that I couldn't find publicly available.

Things I found interesting:

- I can't identify where and how there was a surge of COVID-19 "learning recovery" based on staffing or budget data.
- The adopted budget seems to fluctuate without significant dependence on staff numbers.
- The actual expenditures seems to fluctuate without dependence on staff numbers.
- The actual expenditures as reported by the Town and the Board of Education are vastly different numbers.
- If the town's actual expenditure numbers are correct, it's as if the adopted budget number doesn't matter.

I think in summary, the more I learn about the Board of Education budget the less I actually understand. The Board of Education needs to provide a massive amount of information before someone like myself could support an increase of 10% in spending.

Sincerely,
Michael Dubreuil
180 Woodbine Road

Comment #1:

When reading Article 22, Class Size, of the [Teachers Contract](#) I became a little confused. The introductory text states, "The Board of Education agrees, to the goals". Agreeing to a goal is different than agreeing to a requirement. Then for example you have the text, "No core academic class (Grades PK-2) shall exceed twenty-three (23) students." The use of the word "shall" implies this is a requirement. This contradicts the introductory statement that maximum class sizes are a goal. So is class size a goal or a requirement?

Sources:

Town Data is from the [FY 2022-2023 Adopted Budget](#); Page 30

BOE Data is from the [BOE Budget website](#); Actual Expenditures appear in the [historical adopted budgets](#).

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Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Sun 3/19/2023 10:09 PM

To: **Boards & Commissions** <b-c@colchesterct.gov>

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

From: CINDY PRAISNER <praisner@comcast.net>

Sent: Saturday, March 4, 2023 4:01 PM

To: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>

Subject: Board of Education Budget

Dear Board of Finance Members,

As a citizen of Colchester, I support the Board of Education budget at the 9.83% budget increase. Though my own children have already graduated from Colchester Public Schools, I believe it is our community's civic **duty** to provide a quality education to the children and youth in our town.

Though this increase is tough to swallow, it is not a surprise to find ourselves in this position. Decisions were made to push off our responsibilities and now those consequences are before us. I believe that the Board of Education made the right decision to send this budget forward.

Our town has made decisions based on which group can bring more voters to the polls. We've been on a see-saw between consistently yes and consistently no voters for many years with very low overall voter turnout. This polarization has led to inconsistent implementation of plans, poorly maintained facilities, and a lack of vision for our future. If instead, we provide voters with a unified commitment to our community, reduce the confusion and disinformation, and encourage the 80%+ voters who don't go to the polls to weigh in, we'd have a much more accurate idea of what most residents want. Reasonable voter turnout numbers would remove the burden on the Board of Finance to surmise what town residents are willing to bear.

I believe that it is time to "right the ship" and do what is needed to provide schools and community resources that make Colchester a place where people want to be. If we continue to chip away at what we provide, our town will stagnate. I'm asking that you do the hard thing and send the BOE budget out to the voters without a reduction.

With Respect,
Cindy Praisner
236 Bull Hill Rd

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Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Sun 3/19/2023 10:10 PM

To: **Boards & Commissions** <b-c@colchesterct.gov>

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

From: Alicia Jacobson <alicia.jacobson@maine.edu>

Sent: Sunday, March 5, 2023 4:03 PM

To: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Subject: Colchester Schools Financing

Hello,

I am emailing you after meeting with my old high school teacher Angie Parkinson for my capstone here at the University of Maine in Orono. She informed me that there is a discussion being held on the budget for the Colchester school system.

I always knew I had a unique and effective learning experience in Colchester, but once I got out in the world and heard how other people experienced their K-12 education, I realized that Colchester is *very* unique in its teaching. Important issues were discussed and not shied away from, but were also very open to all opinions and questions that students would have. The after school programs were also fantastic, as I was a part of the Drama club, fencing club, and diversity club when I was in high school from 2010-2014. These clubs were enriching and really fun! In diversity club we were able to go and see many different places, like museums and open lectures by impressive figures such as Niel DeGrasse Tyson.

I come to implore you to not cut the school systems budget. These teachers are so passionate about their work, and I would not be where I am today without them. I currently have a 3.9 GPA and will be graduating summa cum laud, as well as getting a job in my field as an archaeologist when I move to Denver in the summer.

I had a hard childhood growing up, and these teachers, naming Angie Parkinson in particular, were able to keep me going and assure me that I can still chase my dreams. That no matter who I am, where I'm from, or how I was raised, I can be successful in my future.

Thank you,
Alicia Jacobson

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8 of 17

Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Sun 3/19/2023 10:10 PM

To: **Boards & Commissions** <b-c@colchesterct.gov>

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

From: Jillian Previti <jillianmurphy96@yahoo.com>

Sent: Monday, March 6, 2023 10:06 PM

To: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>

Subject: Letter in support of the Proposed Education Budget 2023

Dear Members of the Board of Finance,

My name is Jillian Previti, and I reside at 143 Stanavage Rd. I am writing to you all today as a concerned employee, but more importantly a concerned parent.

My children have been apart of the CPS system for 6 years. Most recently I became an employee at CES as a Special Education Paraprofessional. I have a child that receives services with the special education department at JJIS. He has been receiving services since he started school as a preschooler. I give these wonderful educators a great deal of praise. Especially now, after the Covid-19 pandemic. Times have changed. Learning and the extra need of support has changed.

I would like you all to take a moment and put yourselves in the parents shoes. The educators shoes. Try and understand what it might be like to either raise or teach/support a child in our school system. We have children that may have learning delays, social/emotional problems, etc. Add that into a classroom of 20 plus students with one teacher with sometimes no additional support. When a student is having a hard time in the classroom, not only is it disruptive to the students and teacher, but it also causes a huge amount off stress in the classroom. As a parent of a child that needs extra support in the classroom, but also, being a paraprofessional in the classroom with children that need support. These teachers and students NEED more support and resources, not taking anything away.

If my child doesn't have his support in the classroom, he becomes off task. Not only does this affect his learning, but it affects his classmates as well. As a para, I can tell you first hand that if we don't have the additional support for these kiddos, it causes enormous amounts of stress. Our teachers and children are struggling. We need more resources, not less.

I'm sure you will hear or have heard from members of our community telling you not to support this budget. But, as a parent with 3 children in our school system, I strongly support this budget as well as other members of our community. I have and always will support the education budget. Why are we going to take away the future of our children? I can only hope that you all will take into consideration the importance of approving this budget and let the members of our community tell you what they are willing to do. Please think of our children as our Board of Education members did when they passed the proposed budget to you.

Thank you all for your time.

Sincerely,

Jillian Previti

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Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Sun 3/19/2023 10:10 PM

To: **Boards & Commissions** <b-c@colchesterct.gov>

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

From: Rafe Manning <rmanning@colchesterct.org>

Sent: Tuesday, March 7, 2023 2:26 PM

To: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>; Amy Begue <abegue@colchesterct.org>; Daniel Sullivan <dsullivan@colchesterct.org>

Subject: Education budget

Good afternoon,

And my apologies for sending this message with so little time before tonight's meeting.

My name is Rafe Manning, and I am both a teacher and a resident in Colchester. My wife also teaches at the Academy, and while I shouldn't speak for her, it seems safe to do so on this topic.

It has been a privilege to spend nearly two decades in a classroom with our town's youth. I have found them to be bright, funny, inquisitive, compassionate, and resilient. In other words, they deserve the best we have to offer, including a strong education that meets their needs. To that end, my colleagues have *done* their best—so often giving freely of their time and extra energies. It makes me proud to be here.

Unfortunately, we cannot provide every advantage under the sun, as everything comes with a price tag. But the proposed price for next year's education budget comes with no extravagances, no frills. We're not talking about an omelet station in our cafeterias, or anything quite so ridiculous. Although a 9.8% budget increase may very well sound lavish, I remember a time when our scholastic athletic programs were free to play, and when our office personnel didn't have to worry about the price of postage, and when our educators had enough textbooks that they didn't have to "take turns" with their co-workers. Those are but a few examples of line items that have already been reduced or slashed over the years.

There is no fat left to trim. I won't repeat what you have already heard (and likely discussed) about some of the reasons why this issue has come to a head, other than to say that it has *not* been as sudden as it may appear. If there is a crisis here, it is one that the people of Colchester have been working towards for years.

Consequently, I suffer grave misgivings about the likelihood of our citizens voting "yes" when it comes time for the referendum, but all I ask of you, dear board members, is: can we find out? Please, do not reduce the proposed number before the townspeople make it clear that there is no alternative.

One of the students in our district is my son, Luke, and my daughter will be joining him soon; I would dearly like to know that education is a priority for them, now and in the future.

Thank you very much for your time in reading this letter.

Sincerely yours,

Rafe Manning
English Department
Bacon Academy

"The best thing for being sad," replied Merlin, beginning to puff and blow, "is to learn something. That's the only thing that never fails..."

– T.H. White, *The Once and Future King*

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Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Sun 3/19/2023 10:11 PM

To: **Boards & Commissions** <b-c@colchesterct.gov>

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

From: Kendra Meany <kmeany@colchesterct.org>

Sent: Saturday, March 11, 2023 12:27 PM

To: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Subject: Please Pass the Budget!

Dear Andrea and Board of Finance Members,

I humbly ask that you pass the proposed 9.83% budget.

This is my first year in Colchester schools (and in education for that matter) and my position is unfortunately already in jeopardy.

I can wholeheartedly say that taking this leap of faith into a new career path is where I'm meant to be and I love our schools and kids.

The only way we can move forward and do the work we are meant to do is if we can get beyond the mistakes made by previous leadership and move forward.

Your acceptance of this budget increase is the first step in that.

Thank you!

Kendra Meany
JJIS Library Paraprofessional

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Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Sun 3/19/2023 10:12 PM

To: **Boards & Commissions** <b-c@colchesterct.gov>

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

From: Bill Claffey <bclaffey@fmlcpas.com>

Sent: Tuesday, March 14, 2023 1:36 PM

To: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>

Cc: kmorrissette@colchesterct.org <kmorrissette@colchesterct.org>; Nancy Claffey <nclaffey@comcast.net>

Subject: Elimination of Band at CES & WJJMS

Dear Members of the Board of Finance:

I am writing in support of the continuance of music education and band at CES and WJJMS. As a father of three boys, I have seen the positive impact music (and specifically the band programs) can have on our children. These include:

1. Improvements in vocabulary and language – similar to learning a foreign language, students must stimulate and exercise different parts of their brain to learn and apply the language of music. The impact is immeasurable across many educational disciplines beyond music education.
2. Improved self-confidence – the band programs are a place where children are required to perform. Like sports, these performances and the ovations the students receive from proud parents, siblings, grandparents, etc. bring such pride. Unlike youth sports however, they are not filled with some of the unpleasant actions of overzealous parents. I am a strong proponent of youth athletics and have coached over 25 individual baseball and basketball teams, however, youth sports provide many avenues outside school to participate through various recreation, AAU and other programs. For music, the opportunities are generally limited to the programs offered in school, especially at the elementary and middle school level.
 - a. Of my three boys, my two eldest would qualify at very good athletes and have rarely suffered from lack of confidence – athletics can do that. My youngest son is not as athletic but found his special skill on the drum set. I can't be more grateful to Mr. Morrisette for identifying that early and encouraging Aidan to pursue additional lessons on the drums. His ability on the drums has served to give him incredible pride in not only his jazz and concert band but also himself. It's his calling card and many kids that I've coached in years past have come up to me to tell me that Aidan can 'shred' on the drums. He recently was named the sole drummer for the Eastern Regional Jazz Band where he was conducted by Mr. Tom Fioravanti who (also a drummer) called him 'amazing' and told him to keep pursuing his dreams. None of this would have been possible if the elementary and middle school band programs were eliminated. My son is just one of many kids who found their special skill on an instrument.
3. Self-discipline – music requires practice and discipline. Without it, the performance will suffer and from what I've witnessed first-hand, these students care deeply about the performance. At the middle school level, the jazz band requires after school practice and several performances outside the winter and spring concert, all of which I'm so enthusiastic to attend. At the high school program, many band members arrive 45 minutes before all other students to take part in the 6:45 band. That's discipline!

4. Increased Motor Skills – whether it be piano, drums, guitar, or any of the string, wind, or brass instruments, hand/eye/ear and in some instances lung/mouth coordination is paramount to success. These skills carry over to any and everything these students may face.
5. Increased listening skills – enhanced listening skills can have a positive impact in all facets of life. Music requires the ability to listen intently and apply what they hear. Our country's political climate could improve from better listening skills.

An elimination of the elementary and middle school band programs would effectively cut the high school program off at the knees. In time, student interest in music will decline; the lack of necessary learning and training at these early developmental periods will reduce the talent of musicians entering Bacon Academy and the impact will be felt at the high school program, ultimately leading to its demise.

Our music programs in Colchester are the shining light of our town, a beacon on the hill. Our school system has endured some warts lately, however, our band programs continue to bring incredible pride to the town and its parents. We should be looking to invest more, not less into our music programs. Both the WJMS band (directed by Mr. Morrisette) and Bacon band (directed by Mr. Kessler) are some of the most highly regarded in Connecticut and I could not be more appreciative of Mr. Morrisette and Mr. Kessler for the amazing work they do and am incredibly proud to have children as participants in both programs. I would implore any Board Member to attend concerts at either level and they will be impressed by the dedication of both the directors and the students and by the quality and diversity of the performances. While music at the elementary level is less visible, it establishes the roots that allow the middle and high school programs to grow.

In closing, I beg the town to reconsider any cuts to the CES and WJMS band programs. The benefits noted above are just the tip of the iceberg and Colchester would be significantly worse off without such tremendous programs. Many, like myself who see the significant benefits of the band programs, would consider leaving the Colchester school system if music and band were eliminated.

Bill Claffey

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Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Sun 3/19/2023 10:12 PM

To: **Boards & Commissions** <b-c@colchesterct.gov>

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

From: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, March 14, 2023 4:28 PM

To: 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>

Cc: Art Shilosky <artshilosky@yahoo.com>

Subject: Fw: Let the approved budget go to vote

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

From: Sarah Manfre <smanfre860@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, March 14, 2023 4:20 PM

To: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Subject: Let the approved budget go to vote

To the board of finance,

I have two children in the colchester school system at the elementary level. For the few years we have been in the school system, we have had nothing but amazing things to say about the school and the staff. We love the teachers and administrator and all of the staff for how caring they are. I am afraid of what will happen if this budget does not get approved and things get cut. You will be doing nothing but harming our children. If the PreK and kindergarten classes move to half day, you will burdening many parents who are depending on full day school. You will be setting the children up for learning loss and does not support no child left behind. I cannot imagine the burden that will be put on the teachers if things like this get cut. I ask you to please let the budget go as brought forward by the board of education and leave it to the people of colchester to vote.

Sarah Manfre
51 Starwood Trail

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Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Sun 3/19/2023 10:13 PM

To: Boards & Commissions <b-c@colchesterct.gov>

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

From: Susan Adams <srsolom1@hotmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, March 14, 2023 5:27 PM

To: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shilosky <aShilosky@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Tim Vaillancourt <tVaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>

Subject: Please review

I will be presenting this at your next meeting, please take time to look through the important links within the document. This is a very important topic for the well-being of Colchester.

Susie Adams

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LEsDk-ZxEtL-SK6rGMm-zqfST0UyDS1Cm5YjwMdTBsE/edit?usp=sharing>

.....
 school day. Challenge and enrichment classes within the school day, language starting in grade 1 and up, as well as vibrant music education. These are all programs that have been cut or never implemented into Colchester schools. Having programs such as these attract new residents to their schools, growing their school and town population as well as the tax revenue the town receives.

In today's educational landscape it has been proven that our children are in dire need of social and Emotional Learning support. Many of our kids are in crisis, due to high anxiety, depression, and stress. The pandemic has brought the nation's attention to these needs. The possible reduction of a school counselor and a social worker in addition to the loss of band during this time of high needs for our students would be devastating. Our children need as much support as we can give them at home and at school. Having professionals available to assist our children when they are in need of emotional support is vital to their success in school and in life. It is vital we keep the counselors and social workers as support for our students when they need them.

Music has also been proven to help reduce anxiety, depression, and stress while increasing a student's self-esteem. [There is a recent study published in Science Daily demonstrating the benefit of music education to adolescent health and well-being.](#) The study found that students who started music education before the age of 8 were more hopeful for the future and younger students receiving musical training scored higher in key measures of positive youth development. In a world where our children are struggling with mental health concerns.

Board of Finance

Good evening, I am sorry that we have to be here to fight for what is right for our children. The value of a quality education is the reason most of us have moved to Colchester in the first place. I am distraught that we have to fight to allow this valuable right to continue. As the

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15 and LAST ONE

Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Sun 3/19/2023 10:14 PM

To: **Boards & Commissions** <b-c@colchesterct.gov>

Two of the emails I saved were duplicates. 15 in total.
Thank you!

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

From: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>

Sent: Saturday, March 18, 2023 5:34 PM

To: Zach Potter <zachpotter@gmail.com>

Cc: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; Aoliphant@colchesterct.org <aoliphant@colchesterct.org>

Subject: RE: Education

Hi Zach,

Thank you for reaching out. As First Selectman, I have no jurisdiction over the Board of Education budget. The Board of Finance may make financial reductions and then the Board of Education may decide on All Day Kindergarten. I am cc'ing the Board of Finance Chair and the Board of Education Chair in my response. I wish you and your family a wonderful weekend.

Sincerely,

Andreas

-----Original Message-----

From: Zach Potter <zachpotter@gmail.com>

Sent: Saturday, March 18, 2023 10:42 AM

To: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>

Subject: Education

My wife and I are registered Democrats but will vote both sides of the aisle and are pretty center of the road on most issues. We moved to Colchester with education being the number one reason and realize tax rates are a little higher because it is a great system. My wife signed up for your updates and has been happy with the job you are doing. We decided to buy our first house in this town planning on having our 14 yo and 4 yo graduate from Bacon. I strongly urge you to fight to keep all day kindergarten in place. Not only is it beneficial for the child getting a head start, but it helps parents financially. We spent over 13k in child care this past year and are literally banking on not having such a burden with our 4 yo in school next year. I understand the need to keep the budget reasonable but the constituents who's favor you will lose by slashing education costs in my opinion make up the backbone of this town. Thank you for taking this into consideration,

Zach Potter
12 Blueberry Ln
Colchester CT

Sent from my iPhone

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