

To: Members of the Colchester Board of Finance
Date: February 15, 2019
Re: 2019 survey data dump analysis

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COLCHESTER, VT
2019 FEB 19 AM 8:43

Dear members of the BoF,

As a past member, I'd like to make sure recent events pertaining to my acquiring information from your Chair is not taken out of context. When on the BoF, I was part of the initial efforts to improve previous surveys. There were those feeling the low response rate warranted getting rid of the survey entirely.

Fortunately, through the guidance of the current Chairman, the new survey was a success.

- With over 600 responses, the BoF was able to get far more input than poorly attended public forums and meetings.
- The survey offered those that felt intimidated at public meetings a chance to voice opinions without snide remarks.

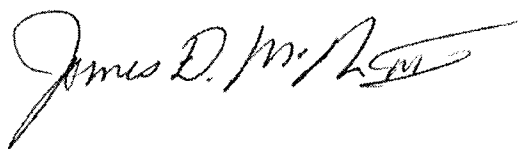
One untapped benefit of the survey was the underlying data. There were opportunities to cross reference data by gender, age, length of residency, status of children in the school system. There was also an opportunity to see if the survey had bias.

Unfortunately, town staff was too busy developing the budget to do the analysis. Many BoF members did not have the background or time. As a result, the Chair allowed me to do the work since that was my background.

In addition, there were concerns how to share the raw data with the public. The biggest concern was the potential for someone to change the data for their own agenda. There was a thought to lock the file and place it on the Town website. That would have defeated the purpose to be able to cross reference the data. As a result, the BoF back then decided to provide the data dump only upon request. The data dump has never been a published public document.

After I left the BoF, I annually asked to get the data. In exchange, I shared the analysis with the Chair and other BoF members. The BoF decided how public to make the data. Until this year, there never seemed to be an issue.

I did share this analysis with the Chair and one other member of the BoF. I was shocked to see the reaction was on the timing of the data being given to me versus what was to be learned from it. For those, unfamiliar with the analysis, I have attached the work. Hopefully, other BoF members will find some benefit to help understand how to use the survey as part of the Budget process.



Prepared by James D. McNair III-private citizen

Overview

# respondents	percent tax increase	%
32		6.5%
	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.	21.3%
105		
	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)	19.9%
98		
	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)	20.1%
99		
	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)	32.1%
158		
492		

Approximately 70% of respondents will tolerate a tax increase of some sort
 Approximately 80% of respondents would tolerate a reduction in services of some sort

percent tax increase	# wanting to maintain funding of education, police and fire	%
>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.	24	20%
1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)	31	25%
10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)	30	25%
Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)	37	30%
	122	

25% of respondents stated they wanted to maintain funding for education and public safety
 Yet, 80% later stated they'd only accept tax increases likely to reduce those services.

In my opinion, there is some disconnect.

Prepared by James D. McNair III-private citizen

Tax Tolerance crossed references against length of residency

How long have you lived in Colchester?	# respondents	percent tax increase
	1	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
	1	
10 - 25 years	69	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
More than 25 years	56	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
10 - 25 years	51	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
10 - 25 years	45	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
More than 25 years	38	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
10 - 25 years	37	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
More than 25 years	34	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
Less than 5 years	23	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
More than 25 years	21	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Less than 5 years	15	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Less than 5 years	14	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
10 - 25 years	13	
5 - 10 years	13	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
Less than 5 years	12	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
5 - 10 years	11	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
5 - 10 years	10	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
5 - 10 years	10	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
Less than 5 years	7	
More than 25 years	6	
5 - 10 years	5	
	492	

Tax Tolerance crossed references against gender and age

Gender	age	# Respondents	percent tax increase
Female	40 - 54	31	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
Female	40 - 54	27	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
Female	40 - 54	25	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
Female	65 +	21	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
Female	40 - 54	20	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Female	55 - 64	20	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
Male	40 - 54	20	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
Male	55 - 64	19	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
Male	65 +	18	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
Female	26 - 39	16	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
Female	55 - 64	15	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
Female	55 - 64	14	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Female	65 +	14	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
Female	26 - 39	13	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
Female	55 - 64	13	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
Male	65 +	13	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Male	40 - 54	12	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.

Male	55 - 64	11	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
Female	40 - 54	10	
Female	65 +	10	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Male	26 - 39	10	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
Male	26 - 39	10	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Male	55 - 64	10	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
Female	26 - 39	9	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
Female	26 - 39	9	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Female	65 +	9	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
Male	26 - 39	9	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
Female	26 - 39	8	
Male	40 - 54	8	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Male	55 - 64	8	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Male	65 +	7	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
Male	40 - 54	6	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
Male	65 +	6	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
Female	65 +	5	
Male	26 - 39	4	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
Male	21 - 25	3	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.

Male	40 - 54	3	
		2	
Female	21 - 25	2	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
Female	21 - 25	2	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Male	21 - 25	2	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
Male	65 +	2	
		1	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
		1	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
		1	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
	26 - 39	1	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
	40 - 54	1	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
	40 - 54	1	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
	40 - 54	1	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
	55 - 64	1	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Female		1	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
Female	Under 21	1	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
Female	Under 21	1	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
Male		1	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
Male	21 - 25	1	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Male	26 - 39	1	
Male	55 - 64	1	

Male	Under 21	1	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
		492	

Tax Tolerance crossed references against status of children in school system

children status	# Respondents	percent tax increase
Children finished with school	54	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
School age children enrolled in Colchester	39	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
No children	38	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
School age children enrolled in Colchester	36	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
School age children enrolled in Colchester	35	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
Children finished with school	33	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
School age children enrolled in Colchester	33	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Children finished with school	30	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
Children finished with school	26	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
No children	26	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
No children	24	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Children in college or other post-secondary program	19	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
No children	18	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
School age children enrolled in Colchester	14	
Children in college or other post-secondary program	11	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
School age children enrolled outside of Colchester	9	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
Children in college or other post-secondary program	8	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
Children finished with school	6	

School age children enrolled outside of Colchester	5	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
Children in college or other post-secondary program	4	
School age children enrolled outside of Colchester	4	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
School age children enrolled outside of Colchester	4	10>1% to 2% Increase (possible reduction in some services)
	3	>2% Increase if Amount is Needed to Maintain Current Services or Add Services.
Children in college or another post-secondary program	3	1>0% to 1% Increase (likely reduce services)
No children	3	
School age children enrolled outside of Colchester	3	
	2	Decrease or No Increase (will reduce services)
	2	