

June 28, 2023

Dear BOF,

I request that this letter is added to the correspondence for the June 28, 2023, meeting of the BoF—I'm not sure if it is a special or regular meeting since the agenda says it is both. Attention to detail again—is it a 1.3 or 1.5 million dollar cut? I digress.

The issue in today's special regular meeting is clear—the BOF has failed to listen to the people throughout the budget process. I am hoping that this changes today. We, the people, have made it clear that we were not in favor of massive effective cuts (when you fund something less than current services, it is cut) to both the town and the education budgets. We told you this at the various budget meetings; then we told you again at the BOS meeting, then repeated it at the town meeting, and then at the referendum. And we will continue saying it for the next 131 days until we are heard.

So let's analyze the results of the election. The first Colchester Budget Referendum of 2023 results are in. 2076 people voted on the Town Budget, and 2075 voted on the school budget. Both budgets failed at the referendum. Both budgets were marked too low as well. The most important thing to highlight is that both budgets would have passed with just the too-low voters! The education budget would have passed with 56.1%, while the town would have passed with 51.7%! This referendum is an electoral mandate—the numbers are clear. Let's further break down the numbers for each budget.

2076 people voted on the town budget, with 741 voting yes while 1335 voted no. So 64.3% of the population voted no. 1758 of the people (84.7% of the voters) that voted on the town budget answered the advisory question. 318 voters did not answer the advisory question for the town budget. 61% of those who answered the advisory question said the town budget was too-low (winning by a margin of 388 votes).

2075 people voted on the education budget (1 less than the town), with 529 voting yes and 1546 voting no. Thus, 74.5% voted against the education budget. 1892 voters (91.2%) answered the education budget advisory question, with the too-low vote winning by 436 votes (1164 too-low to 728 too-high). Therefore, 61.5% voted too low for the education budget. Again, there are not enough non-advisory question voters to overturn the education budget results (only 183 potential voters and the difference between too-low and too-high was 436).

Interestingly, the numbers tell us one critical piece of information. Both budgets could have passed if the board of finance had listened to the people telling them they wanted more funding for the school and the town. The number of too-low votes would have been enough to carry both budgets (hypothetically, the town budget would have passed with 51.7% while the school budget would have passed with 56.1%!). It is also clear that more voters support more money for education than the town--by an impressive margin of almost 5% of those that voted!

In this polarized age, this is the equivalent of a landslide. The Board of Finance should listen to these results, particularly with only 153 days until the election.

Thank you,

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Budget	Yes	No	Percentage for no	Total votes	Difference between yes and no	Too High	Too low	Percentage for too high	Percentage for too low	Percentage of too low voters to total voters	Total advisory question votes	Difference between too high/too low	Number that did not vote on advisory questions	Percent not voting on advisory question	Percentage answering the advisory question.
Town Budget	741	1335	64.3	2076	594	685	1073	39.0	61.0	51.7	1758	388	318	15.3	84.7
Education Budget	529	1546	74.5	2075	1017	728	1164	38.5	61.5	56.1	1892	436	183	8.8	91.2

