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Subject School Budget Meeting
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To the FinnComm:

I attended the school budget meeting last evening. I want to thank all of you for the many hours of volunteer time you put it to keep Millis financially sound. I know you will do whatever is possible/prudent to restore cuts that have had the biggest negative impact. I would also ask for you to also seriously consider the proposal to continue the 8th grade ipad program into 9th grade. I feel that key points were left out of the discussion which I will list below.

I preface my remarks by letting you know that I have 3 kids in Clyde Brown. I am not personally impacted by the HS ipad program.

I noticed that in the Budget Proposal the ipad program was listed very high on the priority list. I trust the Superintendent's recommendations and when she says something is "urgent" or "critical" I think the proposal has the utmost gravity, rather than seeing the request as asking for a luxury.

1) The ipad program makes sense for 9th grade because those students have learned on the ipad for a year in the 8th grade pilot program. The 8th grade ipads go to incoming 8th graders as the content on the devices is geared to 8th graders. Taking away ipads from students who have become reliant on them as a teaching tool is a step backwards and negates some of the progress made in 8th grade. 9th graders need to build on the skills they learned, not abandon them.

2) No other major requests in the budget is for technology. If the proposal is rejected the 9th graders are left with antiquated computers and software. The ipad 2 price has just gone down. This is the most cost effective way for students to have the latest technology. Millis has been very creative with its limited resources. This is very clever way to stay competitive when other schools are still pouring money into traditional computers and software.

3) I learned a surprising fact in the presentation last night that a VERY HIGH percentage of low income students in Millis compared to neighboring towns, drastically different statistics than Medway, Holliston, Walpole. These kids do NOT have access to computers for the increasingly electronic homework. As it is the Clyde Brown homework and Lexia reading has my kids vying for computer time. Computers for public use are just not very available in Millis. It is critical that all kids have a level playing field. If you do not have access to a computer at home you are at a severe disadvantage.

4) I also learned about the age of the text books at the high school and how they are shared. This was shocking information that needs to be immediately addressed. Some of the text books are 10-30 years old. I that means that some of these books are older than I had in High school. This is not acceptable. Especially when you take into account that free text books, courses and study help are available on ipads.

5) Students share textbooks at the High School. An example was given that 1 Biology text stays in a class room and five Biology classes come through a day and use that same textbook. I can not imagine learning or teaching this way. I grew up studying for tests from my textbook at home. It is inconceivable to me that Millis students do not have that option. The ipad eliminates this problem. Students have it to take home. They can study. I am not an educator but studying at home with proper tools verses not being able to have proper study tools has to make a huge difference.

6) The program is considered "Cutting Edge" gives Millis great press to attract new home buyers. Our major source of revenue is our property tax base. Need to keep the school's reputation and rankings high to attract new residents and attract school choice.

7) Students entering college today are required to bring a laptop. If the kids in Millis do not have the ipad program and they cannot afford a home computer, they will be seriously disadvantaged for being ready for college.

8) I will also mention that I have an ipad at home and my daughters have used it when they were pre-schoolers. They are not as fragile as assumed. We take it on trips in the car, have dropped it and spilled on it. It is always in my bag. Still works fine. Libraries loan out tablet devices with regularity. The 8th grade pilot program did not

report any destruction of the devices or any sign that the program was impracticable.

The plan is to buy ipads for next year for 10th, etc so that eventually all 4 years will use ipads. It was stated at the meeting that the students are very engaged by the ipad. It reduces TV time at home. It stimulates visual learning.

The bottom line is that The ipad program was the most cost effective way for kids to have access to technology. It is not a luxury or an empty attempt at a "cutting edge" label. It is a necessity.

Thank you for your attention.

Regards,
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