

3 PRIMROSE STREET
NEWTOWN, CT 06470
TEL. (203) 270-4201
FAX (203) 270-4205
www.newtown-ct.gov



TOWN OF NEWTOWN

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

**Minutes of the Charter Revision Commission Public Hearing Meeting held on Friday
November 5, 2010 in the Council Chamber at the Newtown Municipal Center, 3 Primrose
Street, Newtown, CT.**

Charter Revision Commission Chairman William Lavery called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

PRESENT: Robert Duero, John Godin, Joseph Golden, William Lavery, Carey Schierloh, Peter Spanedda.

ABSENT: Eric Paridis.

ALSO PRESENT: Board of Selectmen member Bill Furrier, Legislative Council member Kevin Fitzgerald, one member of the public.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Lavery made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 18, 2010 meeting. Motion seconded and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Board of Selectmen Member Bill Furrier

Mr. Furrier provided a written statement with his views on bifurcation and advisory questions (**attachment A**). Mr. Furrier feels that bifurcation and advisory questions together would clearly identify voter intent.

Mrs. Schierloh asked Mr. Furrier what the Town would do if the Town side of the budget passed, the BOE side failed and advisory questions indicated that voters wanted the BOE side lower but it had already been cut to the point where state funding would be lost? Mr. Furrier responded that State statute says that school funding can't go lower than the previous year so either the Town approves a budget or we fall back to last year's budget. He felt that the Charter may be able to specify that it would default to the previous year. Mr. Spanedda clarified that lowering BOE funding is permitted, however discouraged by State statutes as the Town would lose \$2 for every \$1 in cuts.

Mr. Godin asked Mr. Furrier if bifurcation or voter intent is more important to him. Mr. Furrier responded that he feels that they're the same, but people should be able to self govern as best as they can. Mr. Furrier added that if a budget is not approved by voters than you need to establish

from the majority of *all* voters which way they want the budget to go. The underlying goal should be to find out how the community wants their resources allocated.

Mrs. Schierloh questioned Mr. Furrier's statement that he supports bifurcation but advisory questions are ambiguous and confusing. Mr. Furrier clarified that the combination of bifurcation and advisory questions gives you the most power to understand the view of the people. He added that the real power is in the separation of the budgets.

Legislative Council member Kevin Fitzgerald – 24 Old Farm Hill

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that he emailed a file to the commissioners that contained approximately 150 taxpayer letters from last year's contested budget season (**attachment D**). Many of the letters addressed the issues of bifurcation and advisory questions and he thought they may be helpful for the commissioners.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that he does not know enough about the pros, cons, and risks of the issue, but that he disagrees with some of the negative reasons people have given for not bifurcating. One of the reasons given is that we are one town and should have one budget. Mr. Fitzgerald feels that while this is nice to say, there will always be competition for resources and there is nothing wrong with that. As the economy continues to struggle that competition will continue.

He feels that Newtown is not an effective representative government. While the Charter allows the public to come to budget hearings, this is the only vehicle that they can tell representatives their opinions while conditions can change from month to month.

Another argument against bifurcation has been that a failed referendum hurts the Town's bond rating. Mr. Fitzgerald disagrees with this view and stated that bond agencies are only concerned that the public pay taxes on the budget that is eventually decided on; they are not turned off by budget failure.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the integrity of our process now is very poor. We are not doing a good job when we're not giving voters a choice. We should not discount bifurcation because of a split between Town and BOE supporters. We already have that and it will always exist.

Mr. Godin questioned if Mr. Fitzgerald felt that the budget request from each side should go to a vote unfiltered? Mr. Fitzgerald responded that review is always good and he would not want to circumvent the Board of Finance or Legislative Council. That being said, if there is an opinion that the BOF recommended cut is too low, why couldn't the legislative council put the initial higher request to voters?

Mr. Godin asked if bifurcation or voter intent is more important to Mr. Fitzgerald. Mr. Fitzgerald responded that since the representative government isn't giving voters a choice without bifurcation and advisory questions, we need to consider them. When people vote for fear out of further cuts, the system is not working.

Robin Fitzgerald – 24 Old Farm Hill

Mrs. Fitzgerald stated that she is speaking for parents of students in the education system and that her family chose Newtown because of the blue ribbon schools. She feels that many people voted no during the last budget process because they wanted the budget higher. She stated that elected officials were not listening to voter intent in letters, emails, and public meetings. If officials are closed minded or have a personal agenda, the system is not working. She supports bifurcation and advisory questions as the Town has no way to gain information on how voters feel. Bifurcation and advisory questions are the only way voters could officially express their opinions.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Lavery provided a letter received from Legislative Council Chairman Jeff Capeci urging the commission to only consider the specific charge from the Legislative Council at this time **(attachment B)**. **Mr. Golden made a motion for the commission to only consider the charge from the Legislative Council. Motion seconded by Mrs. Schierloh and unanimously approved.** Mr. Godin noted that the commission could produce a letter summarizing all of the other issues that were presented and those issues could be brought up for the next commission to consider.

Chairman Lavery distributed language provided by Town attorney **(attachment C)** addressing the charge from the council (6-14(a)) and the inclusion of the Board of Finance's role in a failed budget in the charter (6-14(b)).

In regards to (6-14(a)) Mrs. Schierloh questioned what would happen if 1,000 voters turned out with 400 voting yes, 300 voting no-too high, and 300 voting no-too low? Mr. Duero felt that the Legislative Council and Board of Finance would have to figure it out. Mr. Godin added that the budget is not passed. Mr. Spanedda indicated that if he were on the council in that scenario, he would recommend an increase to the budget because 700 voters said they would accept as is or higher, while 400 voted for it to be lowered.

Mr. Spanedda stated that he does not support bifurcation. Mr. Lavery supports the way (6-14(a)) is worded. Mr. Duero stated that while it gives you a wealth of info, should you ask the same question on both sides of the budget? Mr. Golden feels that in effect we have a bifurcated budget now, just not a bifurcated vote.

Mr. Godin noted that (6-14(a)) refers to option 3 on the charge from the council. He stated that you could have straight yes/no votes but 4 advisory questions (town too high/low, BOE too high/low). The questions would be purely research and that you'd have a decision with the yes/no vote and intent through the advisory questions. He added that you may have under-voting on the advisory questions.

Mr. Godin also added that part of the problem with public hearings is that people who may be more introverted are not going to show up. You never explicitly hear people who want the budget lowered because they're afraid of repercussions.

Mr. Duero stated that he's heard compelling arguments about giving voters more input. A bifurcated budget and advisory questions allow people to express their opinions even if they're not comfortable at a public meeting.

Mr. Spanedda responded that you can't have a popular vote for everything and it's reasonable to expect government officials to deliver a budget that's responsible. If you don't trust them – don't re-elect them.

Mr. Golden made a motion that (6-14(a)) as written be recommended to the Legislative Council. Second by Mr. Godin. Mr. Lavery, Mr. Godin, Mr. Golden, and Mrs. Schierloh in favor. Mr. Spanedda and Mr. Duero opposed. Motion carried 4-2.

Mr. Godin considered advisory questions asking yes/no on both sides of the budget, which may give you more research. The responses may be irrelevant in a passed budget, but if it fails you have a lot more information. Mrs. Schierloh felt that (6-14(a)) is clearer. Mr. Lavery concurred adding that it changes the process and is giving more information from voters. Mr. Duero responded that it still does not tell you which side is too high or too low. Mr. Godin considered an option where voters would have four questions below (6-14(a)) asking if the Town side was too high/low, and the BOE side too high/low). Mr. Lavery disagreed with the option.

Mr. Duero made a motion to add a paragraph with advisory questions asking if:

- 1. The Town side is too high**
- 2. The Town side is too low**
- 3. The BOE side is too high**
- 4. The BOE side is too low**

Motion failed to receive a second.

With regards to (6-14(b)) Mr. Lavery suggested a 48 hour timeframe as appropriate to post public notice in the paper. Mr. Godin questioned if (6-14(b)) is within the commissions charge and that they could recommend it be considered later. Mr. Golden responded that it is part of the budget process and seems within the charge.

Mr. Godin made a motion to keep (6-14(b)) outside of the current commission to be taken up by a future charter revision commission. Second by Mr. Duero. Mr. Godin and Mr. Duero in favor. Mr. Spanedda, Mr. Lavery, Mrs. Schierloh, and Mr. Golden opposed. Motion failed 4-2.

Mrs. Schierloh made a motion to recommend (6-14(b)) with a timeframe of 48 hours to the legislative council. Second by Mr. Golden. Mrs. Schierloh, Mr. Golden, Mr. Spanedda, and Mr. Lavery in favor. Mr. Godin and Mr. Duero opposed. Motion carried 4-2.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Lavery moved to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded and unanimously carried. Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:37PM.

Patrick M. Kelley, Clerk

To: Charter Revision Commission

From: Bill Furrier

Date: November 5, 2010

Subject: Bifurcation and Advisory Questions

Newtown's last budget experience caused a great deal of confusion among some of our elected officials who seemed to find difficulty understanding why people were voting against the proposed budget. Promises were given to the community that this confusion would be addressed through a charter revision process that would study bifurcation and advisory questions.

It's clear to me that the majority of our community thinks that advisory questions are needed no matter what budget process we follow. I am optimistic that the Charter Review Commission will come to the same conclusion.

I also support bifurcation of our town budget because it will give the people of Newtown more control over their tax dollars, their government and their community's future. Because it will fully establish unambiguous voter intent and it will provide much needed conflict resolution. However, I recognize that there are other elected officials who oppose the concept of voting on separate town and education budgets. That is why I believe that the issue should be decided by a vote of the people of Newtown, regardless of the fact that there are differences of opinion among some elected officials.

Over the last decade, many of our proposed budgets have been rejected at referendum. The budget debates that occurred have fostered a divide that has stoked tensions between groups of people in our community. This year, we experienced a serious budget crisis, with "the will of the electorate and voter intent" on center stage. Some voters felt the Legislative Council and the Board of Finance were "holding a gun to their head" by applying what they saw as lopsided cuts to the education budget when compared to the town budget, with a promise of further cuts if the budget failed. Some people voted "No" to the budget because they wanted to see more funds restored to the education budget. Supporters of the town budget were concerned that the town budget would be reduced in order to appease the education supporters. A great public conflict raged, and resolution was impossible without knowledge of voter intent. If the budget process remains as it is, then the conflict which we have been experiencing will continue to rage.

Bifurcation will require each budget to stand on its own merits and will force elected officials to be more in tune with the will of the voters. If the town budget is acceptable to the community, then it will pass. If the school budget is not, then advisory questions will help guide our elected officials in the direction to go; up or down. Right now, based on the number of failed referendums we have experienced, it is clear that our elected officials are clueless of voter intent and are presenting initial budget proposals satisfactory to only themselves.

Bifurcation also provides the community with a means of conflict resolution. The First Selectman said that bifurcation will "create competition for scarce resources" and "winners and losers". But we already have competition for scarce resources, and a divided community seeking settlement to the same resource disputes year after year. It is well understood that democratic elections and referendums settle disputes with finality and that elections and referendums have consequences, with clear and indisputable winners and losers. If we seek to avoid winners and losers, then we instead prolong our disputes indefinitely without settlement, which only stokes divisiveness as we saw last year. Bifurcation will allow clear conflict resolution to budget debates and will benefit our community by reducing divisiveness and will promote healing, which is just what we need.



Some suggest that advisory questions alone can sufficiently provide for the will of the people, but advisory questions and bifurcation are not equivalent. Advisory questions can help provide clarity to the budget discussions, but they are not binding, some people may not answer them and the answers given can be ambiguous and open to interpretation by the Legislative Council. By bifurcating, we will provide the voter with the opportunity to make their intentions clearly known without ambiguity and we empower the people with the control they should rightfully own over their tax dollars and their community.

Those opposed to bifurcation have done so by citing that constraining our town government's powers to control the allocation of tax dollars across competing priorities will cause harm to our community, and I agree that it may be true that electoral volatility may pose elected officials with challenges. However, our government's powers are expressly granted by and for the benefit of the people, and the power to allocate expenditures against the wishes of the people is not to the benefit of the people but is instead to the benefit of those who have been elected to serve the people. These arguments against bifurcation are arguments for powers that allow for governing against the consent of the governed.

The chairman of the Board of Finance has stated that research indicates that bifurcation could impact the bond rating of the town, but he brings only anecdotal evidence to support such a serious charge, that 13 of 18 communities that bifurcate have lower bond ratings than Newtown's. He offers no evidence correlating a relationship between bifurcation and bond rating, while many other independent variables exist that can account for a community's lower bond rating. This argument is strictly opinion in the absence of scientific evidence linking bond rating to bifurcation.

What all these points and arguments distill down to is a simple question: Who shall best decide the allocation of tax dollars across competing priorities; the people who pay the taxes, or the elected officials who represent those people? The answer can be found in the Connecticut Constitution, which states:

Article First (bill of rights) sec 2: "All political power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their benefit; and they have at all times an undeniable and infeasible right to alter their form of government in such manner as they may think expedient."

Bifurcation combined with advisory questions will strengthen these well founded constitutional rights. Without compelling evidence showing harm, our state constitution should lead us to conclude that the interests of the people should prevail over the interests of the elected. No compelling evidence has been forwarded to support the claims that bifurcation will cause harm to the community. Instead, all opposition against bifurcation are based solely on the opinions of individuals who stand to lose some of their power over the people's tax dollars. We need the Charter Revision Commission to make an honest and thorough analysis of bifurcation, based on evidence not opinion, which can be shared with the community so that they may decide for themselves through a public vote. To deny the community the opportunity to vote on bifurcation based on the opinions of a few among us would suggest to the community that their elected leaders possess an arrogance that they know better what is best for the community then does the community for itself. And as we have seen over and over again with the budgets that have been presented by these same elected officials, their rejection by the voters would strongly indicate that bifurcation is an issue that should and must be decided by the voters of Newtown.

3 PRIMROSE STREET
NEWTOWN, CT 06470
TEL. (203) 270-4201
FAX (203) 270-4205
www.newtown-ct.gov



B

TOWN OF NEWTOWN
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

November 2, 2010

Honorable William Lavery
Chairman, Newtown Charter Revision Commission
3 Primrose Street
Newtown, CT 06470

Dear Bill,

I write this letter in response to a request from Dick Zang of the Water and Sewer Authority dated October 15, 2010. Prior to the last budget cycle, several charter related issues interested council members and prompted the discussion of forming a charter revision commission. After a protracted budget season, the number one issue members heard from constituents was that the current budget process was not adequately serving our community. The council agreed that it would be best to put other items aside and form a commission to look at the very narrow charge which was unanimously approved by the council and given to you at the formation of the commission.

The concerns I have with looking at additional items are twofold. First adding issues that have not been discussed in advance by the public or the council could threaten adherence to the rigid timeline required to bring changes before the electorate in time to affect the budget referendum in April. Second, because of the abundance of other issues many council members, town officials and citizens alike have expressed with regard to the charter, coupled with the fact that there is no minimum waiting period between revisions, I believe another commission can and should be formed. This can be accomplished as early as January 2011 after the next council takes office. A future commission, in my view, should be charged to examine the charter more comprehensively with the objective of further adapting our governing document to meet the needs of a changing town.

In conclusion, while the argument can be made that the WSA should be included in the charter, I see no urgency in doing so at this time especially at the risk of completing the work the commission has done to date. I encourage you to document this and any other issues to be investigated in the future. Thank you and the entire membership of the Charter Revision Commission for your service to Newtown.

Respectfully,

Jeff Capeci (sm)

Jeffrey Capeci
Chairman, Newtown Legislative Council

cc: Dick Zang

6-14(a)

At the Annual Budget Referendum, the proposed budget shall be approved as a whole by a majority of those voting who are lawfully entitled to vote, or rejected as a whole by a majority of those voting who are lawfully entitled to vote, provided, however, if rejected, voters shall indicate whether the Budget is being rejected as "too low" or as "too high." The question and responses on the ballot shall be as follows:

Shall the sum of \$_____ be appropriated as the annual Town Budget for the fiscal year?

- a.) Yes
- b.) No, Too High
- c.) No, Too low

Voters shall be required to vote for one item only. For the purposes of determining whether or not the annual town budget has been rejected, all no votes (items b and c) shall be added together. Items b and c shall be advisory only and shall not be binding on the budget making authority.

6-14(b)

In the event that a majority of those voting reject the proposed budget, the Board of Finance shall meet and upon due deliberation recommend a Budget to be considered by the Legislative Council. Given the advisory nature of items b and c referenced in Section 6-14(a) above, in making its recommendation, the Board of Finance may consider the number of voters rejecting the Budget as "too high" and the number of voters rejecting the Budget as "too low." However, the number of voters rejecting the Budget as "too high" and the number of voters rejecting the Budget as "too low" shall not be binding on the Board of Finance. **TIME FRAME TO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL?**

The Legislative council shall reconsider (including the recommendation of the Board of Finance as set forth in this section) and recommend a Town Budget within...

D

Patrick Kelley

From: Kevin Fitzgerald [kevinkis@aol.com]
Sent: Friday, November 05, 2010 5:12 PM
To: Spanedda, Peter; cschierloh@gmail.com; golden1231@earthlink.net; eric@paradistribe.net; duero_tx@msn.com; jgodin1312@charter.net; BillandJoanLavery@yahoo.com
Subject: Letters from taxpayers during budget 2010
Attachments: Letters from taxpayers - Thru 040710.doc

Dear Charter Review Commission members,

I have attached a file I put together on behalf of the Legislative Council and which is also part of the minutes from a LC meeting in the Spring. It contains about 150 email letters from taxpayers sent to LC members during the budget season. In addition to expressing an opinion on the budget, many letters include reference to advisory questions and a few reference splitting or bifurcating the budget. That so many taxpayers thought it necessary to address these issues tells me that many, many more taxpayers feel the same way.

I understand you have heard already from many of Newtown's elected officials on the questions of budget bifurcation and advisory questions. If there is one thing this past budget season has taught me as an LC member, it's that Newtown has a poor track record when it comes to supporting those constituents when their majority public opinion doesn't fit with other agendas.

I believe you have been charged to address the few questions before you in the short time you have because the LC recognizes that Newtown's taxpayers have made it clear they want to see a change from how budgets have been decided in the past. In fact, there are a number of other LC issues that I believe would benefit from your review, however, it is the budget questions that taxpayers expect action on this year.

So as you make your decisions, I hope you recognize that opinions you hear from elected and appointed officials (*myself included*) on the bifurcation and advisory issues may well be the very same reason why so many taxpayers are looking for a better way to make their opinions about a proposed budget heard.

Thank you for your service on this important Commission.

Kevin Fitzgerald

Letters and Emails from Taxpayers regarding the 2010-2011 Budget

D

XX

XX

March 12, 2010

Dear Kevin,

What is Newtown's educational goal? Prepare children for success? Survive in mediocrity? Lag behind?

It is irresponsible to reduce the Board of Education's requested budget. We are seeing year after year struggles of teachers and administrators to teach a wide range of abilities of students. The class sizes are already too big for teachers to effectively know, much less inspire, our most precious resource. Increased class sizes allow children to slip through the cracks, beginning in the elementary schools, continuing through high school. I've seen the 'downside' of what I believe was an overwhelmed teacher played out on a small child who is now at risk of losing interest in school. This 'downside' has a name, feelings and a family who has shared in his struggle. Each child deserves to be cared for by their classmates, teachers, administrators, bus drivers, parents and community members. I can help to educate my children outside of school hours but feel my hands are tied as to their experiences in the classrooms as budgets are continually cut. I am concerned about the quality of their future years during school hours.

Year after year, the special education budget, as mandated by law, requires a huge amount of money be spent disproportionately on a subset of students. This help, while mandated, is not fully funded by the state or federal governments. Much of this money is coming from the Newtown school budget and is taking away from the experiences and opportunities of all the students in town. To think there is 'fluff' in the Board of Education budget is an unlikely situation. Seeing the creativity to make budgets work last year by our educators does not show that we have excess in this year's budget. This budgetary scrutiny by our educators shows their willingness to improve our children's education and should not be used against the current and future children in Newtown.

We should not be aspiring to constantly do more with less, we should trust the people who our boards have themselves searched for and hired, to do what they were hired to do - teach our children now and plan for their future education. Those who we hired as experts in education, and our children, should not be set up for failure by taking money away from their important needs. I implore you to approve the budget proposed by the Board of Education. Let's start trusting our educators to do what we have chosen them to do. Let's trust their experience and love of our children, by allowing them to have the money they need to not only teach, but inspire our children. Let's work together now and in the future so we can shake hands and say- look what we've helped our children accomplish. I hope we will all look at them as a collective group of parents and community members and smile as they smile back at us, ready to enter into their schools and careers of choice.

We owe them no less.

Please reinstate the \$2.5 million back into the budget set by the Board of Education.

Thank you,

Christal Preszler
14 Overlook Drive
Newtown, CT 06470

(mom to Julia - age 12, Scott - age 9, Nick - age 7 - current students of Newtown Public Schools)

XX

March 12, 2010

Hi Kevin,

I am writing you to urge you to restore the 2.5 million dollars to the budget. I attended the PTA mtg with your wife Robin at Hawley. I am a member of the Executive PTA Board at Hawley. I join my husband and many others in our growing concern that our public schools will be come a watered down and pathetic version of the past acclaimed Blue Ribbon status. While we can empathize with those who say they cannot afford to live in this town anymore, I caution them to realize that those homes many of them live in (some while other taxpayers helped pay for their children's Blue Ribbon education) will be worth very little if the towns's educational system plummets. No one will want to buy homes in town where the school system cannot provide a high level of classroom instruction. No businesses will want to exist in a second rate town. The 2.5 million dollar cut will DIRECTLY effect that instruction.

I grew up in this town and attended the public schools K-12. We specifically moved back to this town when we had children because of our high regard for it's teachers and staff. Please don't make us regret that decision. I cannot attend night time meetings as my husband travels to CA Monday-Friday. Please share my thoughts with your council.

Thank you for your time.

Sarah & Bernard Findley
9 Lovells Lane
XX
February 25, 2010

Dear Council Members:

First of all, I wish to thank you for serving our community. Taking time away from family and friends, as well as work during these tough times, is much appreciated.

I would like to ask that you put forward the Board of Education budget as is and allow the voters to decide what we can or cannot afford. Also, if the BOF cuts from the budget I respectfully ask that you vote to restore those cuts. I believe THE VOTERS should have the first shot at the budget. If it doesn't pass, then you have every right to cut out what you think is necessary for the budget to pass. Our students deserve the best education we can afford. Education is the only shot our kids have at making it in this tough world.

Thanks you for your consideration of my opinion.

Kind regards,

Bob Sabin
9 Knollwood Drive
District 1

XX
March 13, 2010

Dear Legislative Council,

PLEASE do not allow a \$2.5Million cut to our schools! Restore it and let the voters decide. These kids are our future and these cuts year after year are disheartening to us who treasure education. We want our kids to have every experience they can without abbreviating their choices or comprising their educational situations.

Thank you and sincerely,

Bonnie & Dan Sailer
118 Head Of Meadow Road
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Joan Plouffe 031510

I am herein requesting that you restore the BOE budget as well!

Joan
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
031510

I fully appreciate the role the LC plays in the budget process and how it impacts both the tax payers, town employees and students. Clearly, as we did last year, we are facing tough economic times. This I am sure is weighing heavily on the BOF and on their recommendations. On the other hand it is the voters and taxpayers of Newtown who will be paying the tax bill , and in the end they should decide how tight the budget should be. It is certainly wise to pay attention to what they think the tax payer is willing to spend, but in the end only the voters know that for sure. Last year the BOF thought they understood what the voters were willing to vote for, and in the end an over whelming number voters approved the budget perhaps suggesting that we underestimated the budget they would have supported. We may again be faced with the same issue of trying to outguess the voters.

I would like to suggest that you allow the voters not the BOF to make that decision. By assuming the worst case scenario the BOF budget may be denying important services and education opportunities the voters in fact desire and are willing to pay for.

In addition to perhaps underestimating the votes the BOF this year has made adjustments to the BOE budget based on very optimistic venter agreements. If these optimistic cost numbers prove to be correct wonderful, but if not the BOE will have no option but to make up the difference by cutting staff and student program. If the BOF directs the BOE to use those optimistic cost number the town might consider protecting the BOE and students if they are wrong. Perhaps a contingency fund to cover those costs if in fact they come in higher. The LC is now in the uncomfortable position of being the entity telling voting parents that programs and teachers will be cut. The LC will be making the decisions, as the BOE simply implements the budget it's given. The LC will be the one deciding if pay for play should be expanded requiring parents to pay much more than they pay now, or if after school programs will simply be cut.

Rather than being in the position of being blamed for guessing wrong I strongly urge you to restore dollars to the BOE budget and let the voters decide how much they want to curtail services and our education program. They will tell you for sure, right now the BOF is just guessing, and they may be wrong again this year. Please don't underestimate the importance the voters place on these services, their children's education and ultimately in the value of their homes.

Thanks I know this will really be an important decision for the LC and the voters of Newtown.
My best wishes as you deliberate.

Bruce Walczak
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
From megg629@aol.com

I oppose the \$2.5million cut to the education budget. As a voter and taxpayer, I am requesting that you restore these funds and let the voters decide.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Recvd 031610

Dear Members of the Legislative Council,

I realize economic times are difficult but I ask you to consider adding the 2.5 million back into the BOE budget and letting the public decide on the budget.

Since my husband was on the BOE for 5 years I am well aware of what little money they actually have to "play" with. As you know, with the many contracts, fixed costs and mandates from the state and federal government, our education budget is far more limited as to what we can "cut" than most people realize. The cuts that the BOF proposed deals with "anticipated savings" which may or may not happen. In this economic climate it is likely not to happen.

I urge you to restore the 2.5 million and let the public decide.

Sincerely,
Michele Buzzi

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
031610

Hi Kevin –

I'm writing to you in hopes that you can help with all this madness!

Please look into teacher's salaries, benefits, the bus system, anything else but cutting opportunities for our children.

Our children are our future and legacy. When my husband & I moved to Newtown, 12 years ago, it was "what Newtown had to offer" why we settled in this magnificent town...

It would be so disappointing if it all falls apart year after year because our elected officials have not taken what is most important into consideration at the highest level – our children's future and quality of life her in Newtown, CT!

I ask you to fight for what is right in this town – protect our children and their future. Do not remove their after school programs, sports, learning opportunities...

Thank you,

Betsy Paynter

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
031610

We have three children in the Newtown school system, and fervently support restoring the recent \$2.5 million cuts to the proposed budget.

Thank you.

Teresa LaCroce

30 Old Farm Hill Road

Newtown, CT 06470

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
31610

Dear Members of the Legislative Council,

I support adding the 2.5 million back into the BOE budget. Please let the public decide on the budget.

Thank you.

Jen Peterson

Silpada Designs
Independent Representative

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
31610

Dear Members of the Legislative Council,

I realize economic times are difficult but I ask you to consider adding the 2.5 million back into the BOE budget and letting the public decide on the budget.

We moved here from NY 10 years ago. One of the main reasons we moved to Newtown was because of the school system. Since then three of my four children attend the public schools and I am delighted with their progress and experiences they have due to the rich educational environment.

My husband is a local businessman and has recently had to downsize due to the economy but plans on expanding and "setting up shop" again in town.

These cuts would eventually affect our children's education and we would not want to have to look "elsewhere" for an education that stands up to the one they receive in Newtown today.

I urge you to restore the 2.5 million and let the public decide as it is our children who will be directly affected.

Sincerely,

Kerriann Cartelli

14 Juniper Road

Newtown, CT 06470

XX

031610

To the Members of the Newtown Legislative Council -

Mrs. Jan Andras, Mr. John Aurelia, Mr. George Ferguson, Mr. Kevin Fitzgerald, Mr. Gary Davis, Mrs.

Maryann Jacob, Mr. Chris Larocque, Mr. Richard Woycik, Mr. Dan Amaral,

Mr. James Belden, Mr Jeff Capeci, Mr Ben Spragg

When did educating our young people, who are the future of our country, become a luxury? When did we start putting the future needs behind the past?

I was shocked to hear that after months of diligent work and negotiations by our Superintendent that the Board of Finance has decided to cut an additional \$2.5MM from an already lean education budget. It was apparent that the Board of Finance, who is supposed to be strictly advisory, does not wish to give tax payers the opportunity to pass a budget that would allow our School District the means to provide the education we all want.

The PISA Listing, Programme for International Student Assessment, ranks scholastic education among industrialized countries. Students of the United States of America rank 15th in Reading Literacy, 24th in Mathematics and 21st in Science. We are consistently BEHIND countries such a Finland, South Korea and the Czech Republic. Having personally lived in both the Czech Republic and South Korea, I witnessed how parents worked tirelessly each day, sacrificing personally, to ensure that their children received the best education possible. My parents did the same and perhaps your parents did the same for you. So why is the BOF now allowed to decide that OUR CHILDREN should not be afforded the same quality education we all had?

Some may chose to dismiss the PISA information but I caution you to think of this. These young people, who the Board of Finance have chosen to short change, will be our future teachers, accountants, shop keepers, manufacturers, doctors, nurses and pharmacists. Our children will someday be making decisions that could possibly impact YOUR life. Do you want them to be ready for the challenges of the global market and be prepared to do the best job in their field for you and for the economic future of our country? Or do you want to sit back and say, "Hey, the town saved a few tax dollars in fiscal year 2010-11, and I am going to live comfortably on the interest saved from that money?"

The Board of Finance chose to cut just over \$288,000 from the "town side" of the budget - one tenth of what they are choosing to cut from the education side of the budget. Why the disparity? Have we sunk so far down that we have lost the dream that our forefathers and mothers came to this country for? Have we forgotten that our children are our future and that is where we need to focus our resources?

Are all of you, the fiscal authority of the town, strong enough to stand up to the Board of Finance, which is supposed to be "strictly advisory"? This is a question only the 12 of you can answer.

As a parent and a tax payer, I beg you to re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me to vote for a budget with the adequate services I desire for my children.

Sincerely -

Donna Monteleone

Randle

4 Erin Lane

Sandy Hook

XX

031610

Dear Council Members:

I have no children in the Newtown school system, so you would think that the cuts made by the Board of Finance would be welcomed by me. If I were only concerned with property taxes and the current economic environment I might very well welcome these cuts. However, we as citizens of Newtown and the United States have a greater obligation and that is simply to assure that all of our students are provided with the best possible education. We have hired a very capable Superintendent, elected dedicated and committed members to the Board of Education and are adding physical improvements to our teaching facilities, yet we grant fiscal power to six individuals to control the quality of education of over 5,000 students, all under the guise of fiscal responsibility. Let the Board of Education do their jobs. Accept their very detailed presentation to the Board of Finance as their absolute financial requirement and reinstate the \$2,500,000.

If we can build a town hall that cost the town well over \$12,000,000 to house approximately 300 employees, certainly we can spend another \$2,500,000 to maintain the quality of education for over 5,000 students.

Sincerely,

A.P. Roznicki
169 Hanover Rd.
Newtown, CT

XX

As a Newtown parent, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Fran Maturo
5 Ironwood Drive
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XX

As a Newtown parent, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that

budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Hui Qin
130 Alpine Dr.
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XX

To All Legislative Council Members of Newtown;

I am writing to you as a concerned voter and citizen of Newtown. I want you to know that I am appalled at the cuts made to the education side of Newtown's budget by the Board of Finance this year. I feel that they are unfair and punitive. How is the education system supposed to absorb these costs without it effecting the quality of education? I do realize that we are in hard economic times, and the increases need to be justified, however, after the BOF acknowledged that many of the increases were fixed costs, they continued on to pick apart other costs and estimates, THEN added on an additional cut and told the BOE to "be creative". My husband and I picked Newtown out of several towns recommended to us during a corporate relocation from Chicago. The first thing we judged these future homes by was quality of schools. Newtown was the recent recipient of Blue Ribbon Status and that decided it for us, even though our daughter was only 1 at the time. Newtown's schools

have been on a slow slide ever since. It's a shame because if you are engaged in the school system in any way, you can't help but see the potential. Our staff cares so much. From the Superintendent to the Custodians to the Bus Drivers, they all have a high level of performance when it comes to our children. Don't you believe that this level of care will drop simply because we are asking all of them to perform miracles? How long will it be before the resentment sets in? We need to do better. (It is much the same as Social Security for our seniors. No one wants seniors to live out their golden years in poverty and poor health after working hard all their lives, so we all gladly pay our share to keep this from happening. The same should go for our children's education.) Our school system is far from the top of the heap in terms of dollars spent per student in our state, so let's stop second guessing the BOE. They have proven through a battery of questions that they have considered every scenario. If you have attended the meetings you have witnessed it. Now, it is time for you all, as our legislative branch, to RESTORE THE \$2.5 MILLION AND LET THE VOTERS DECIDE. Many of you ran for office promising quality in education and more public participation and now is the time to follow through on your campaign promises.

I am sure you are all aware of our Board of Education's mission statement:

The mission of the Newtown Public Schools, a partnership of students, families, educators and community, is to INSPIRE EACH STUDENT TO EXCEL in attaining and applying the knowledge, skills and attributes that lead to personal success while becoming a contributing member of a dynamic global community. We accomplish this by creating an unparalleled learning environment characterized by: High expectations, Quality instruction, Continuous improvement and Civic responsibility.

Make it happen.

Sincerely,

Robin Fitzgerald

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

As a Newtown parent, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Sandy Schill

23 Gelding Hill Road

Sandy Hook, CT

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

As a Newtown parent and educator, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Lisa Sheridan

6 Honey Lane

Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Members of the Legislative Council, last night at the High School Orientation for incoming Ninth Graders, we picked up a booklet titled Newtown High School Activities. It is full of Good Choices. The teachers and administration speaking at the orientation highly advocated getting involved. The benefits of extra-curricular activities are clear. They are an essential enrichment for students, providing opportunities that will help them define their futures, and foster school spirit while keeping them safely engaged. After-school activities are a benefit to the entire community, and money well-spent.

Money well-spent by the town not only at the High School, but also at the Middle School and Reed Intermediate. Nobody wants more twelve and thirteen-year-olds swarming the center of town from 2:00 to 5:00.

Pay to Play is a desperate measure that excludes children whose parents do not pay. Organizing Pay to Play is in itself a quagmire. How and who would administer the program? A la carte would mean a different

price for each activity with some being prohibitively expensive. It would also mean that the less attended activities may be dropped altogether, discouraging diversity. An all-inclusive price would be high for students attending only one or two activities. Paying directly for activities means that they will be scrutinized more closely. There may be controversy involved with some parents not wanting their money to go toward some activities. How do we discriminate without being discriminating?

Another way we use our money wisely is by keeping class sizes reasonable. Cutting out a cluster at the Middle School would make learning significantly more difficult. Middle School children are too young to be dehumanized by crowding them together with 30/1 student/teacher ratios. At this age, kids are still learning about personal responsibility and they are not ready to be thrown into the deep end.

Please vote to put the 2.5 million back into the budget, so that we taxpayers can make the choice when we vote. We want to vote YES for a budget that we believe in. We want to spend wisely so that our children receive a good education.

Thanks so much for all of the hard work that you put in toward making Newtown a great place to live.

Sincerely, Elizabeth Alexander

XX

The Board of Finance recently took 2.5 million out of the Board of Education budget and the Legislative Council has the authority to add it back in or at least add a portion of it back in. Personally, I want the public to have the option of voting on the original BOE budget. As a concerned parent and taxpayer, I urge you to restore the 2.5 million to the BOE budget and let the public decide.

Sincerely,

Elin Hayes

7 Bradley Lane, Sandy Hook

XX

I reside in Newtown, however I am a teacher in another district and consider education to be a priority for the future of our community. I understand that the economy is difficult at this time, but the children need to be more of a priority. If we do not invest in their future today, it will have long term affects on them as well as on our community. In addition, people currently move to Newtown because the school system is strong. If there are too many cuts, the education system will not continue to have the same reputation which will further impact the economy. Please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me as a taxpayer to vote on the budget to provide a better education for the children of Newtown.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Mammen

7 Old Bridge Rd.

Sandy Hook CT 06482

XX

I reside in Newtown, however I am a teacher in another district and consider education to be a priority for the future of our community. I understand that the economy is difficult at this time, but the children need to be more of a priority. If we do not invest in their future today, it will have long term affects on them as well as on our community. In addition, people currently move to Newtown because the school system is strong. If there are too many cuts, the education system will not continue to have the same reputation which will further impact the economy. Please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me as a taxpayer to vote on the budget to provide a better education for the children of Newtown.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Mammen

7 Old Bridge Rd.

Sandy Hook CT 06482

XX

As a Newtown parent, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Donna Sullivan
4 Liberty Drive
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XX

I agree. If Newtown does not maintain the School System then it will force Good Taxpayers to find a better city.

Don't sacrifice our children's future.

Thank you,
Alan L. Mammen
GE Corporate

XX

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As you all know by now I am opposed tot he 2.5 million dollar proposed cut to the Education budget. What you may not know is that my son, Douglas, a sophomore at NHS, is a success story that highlights the value of SPED and cither services that could be impacted by such a budget cut.

Douglas lost the hearing in his right ear when he and another student collided on the playground in second grade. While hearing has returned his loss is moderate to severe with soft sounds unavailable to him.

Years of researching unilateral hearing loss, asymmetrical auditory processing and neurological components to processing language was shared with the school staff, and in 8th grade Douglas was identified as need special ed services. The attached document shows the educational impact NOT receiving SPED services had on Douglas' access to information and academic performance during a three year academic period compared to a dynamic growth and recovery after only 8 months of SPED services. Please note that in high school the services continue. Douglas has attained honors.

SPED brings a variety of images to people based on their personal experiences. Thank you for taking the time to review our world.

Karen Carey Pierce

XX

Legislative Council Members,

I am writing to urge you to reject the 2.5 million dollar cut imposed by the Board of Finance on the Board of Education's 2010/2011 budget. The Board of Education and school district administrators have worked extensively over the past months, nay the past three years, to reduce costs and save money for Newtown taxpayers. The budget they presented this year would barely allow our educators to stay the course towards instructional goals, and the Legislative Council should be responsible to the people of Newtown by letting us decide if we approve the Board of Education's request. I believe the Board of Finance's assumption of 1.4 million in commodity savings (resulting in a net cut of only a million from Board of Education's budget) is premature. I also am saddened that the Board of Finance assumes its advisory role to the town includes changing the course of the programs provided my children by the Board of Education, the school administrators, and the educators hired by the town and formally chosen to do so.

As a taxpayer and an educator with over twenty years of experience, I would much rather be given the opportunity to vote on Board of Education budget approval, than have that right taken from me by the Board of Finance and yourselves. EVERY parent I have spoken with about this issue would prefer to pay the potential 5-6% increase in property taxes than have further cuts made to the educational and after school programs provided our children. Some of these parents have children in preschool and recently purchased their homes in Newtown solely because of Newtown Public Schools.

Remember in your deliberations that the cut in programs and the reduction in staffing that will be forced upon the district with a 2.5 million dollar decrease in budget will have far reaching effects. I already see the evidence of the cuts in our district's technology program when I compare my own children's twenty-first century skills to those of my same aged students in Westport.

A community will pay for what it values. I know I would much rather pay more in taxes for my almost middle school daughter, than spend an equivalent amount on cell phone service for her. I know I speak for many when I say I value our children ABOVE ALL!

Please vote to reinstate a full funding of the Board of Education's Budget for 2010/2011.

Sincerely,
Priscilla A Jones
5 Meadow Road
Newtown

XX

As a Newtown parent, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Sandy Black
9 Elana Lane
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XX

Dear Legislative Council Members,

We moved to Newtown 17 years ago with a toddler. We lived with a leaky roof and other household imperfections in order to insure we were in a good school system when our child was ready for school. She is now a freshman in college. We have a daughter in fifth grade and I am not feeling like the sacrifices we made as young parents will pay off for her. You need to hear the voices of the people who are willing to pay some more in taxes to insure the high level of education expected from our wonderful schools. Please reinstate all of the \$2.5 million to our education budget. If the quality of education in Newtown is not maintained there will be people leaving town because of the quality of the schools as oppose to families like us who came here for their greatness. Some may already have left.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter and for working to benefit all of Newtown residents.

Jean and Dale Walter
19 Fairchild Drive

XX

Dear PTA Officers of Sandy Hook, Reed, NMS, and NHS,

Currently, I have one child in Sandy Hook, one at Reed, one at the middle school and one at the high school and I am very concerned with the quality of education for my children and for all other 5000 students in the district. With Kinga Walsh's permission, I am forwarding the summary she drafted after last night's BOE meeting. This information along with any additional information from the meeting minutes and the slide presentation will help you to determine your plan of action.

As you can see, the \$2.5MM cut to the school budget is detrimental to the school system and I would like to know what type of stance the PTAs would be taking this year. Will you accept the \$2.5MM cut and push for a "YES" vote knowing that class sizes will increase, programs will be eliminated, and the schools may be forced to ask the parents to organize/fund/run the after school activities including the intramural sports programs at the high school?

The mission of the CT PTA is as follows:

"Our Mission

- Support and speak on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community, and before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children;
- Assist parents in developing the skills they need to raise and protect their children; and
- Encourage parent and public involvement in the public schools of the nation."

I urge the PTAs, the advocates of the school system, to fight for my children and the other 5000 students in the school system. Please urge the Legislative Council to listen to the frustrated parents who feel they have not been heard. I am very empathetic to those affected by the economic downturn however school budget decisions should not be solely based on what the Board of Finance (or what the Legislative Council) believe is the magic number that will pass the first time around at the referendum. There is nothing wrong with presenting the Board of Education's budget to the voters. Why not allow the voters to make that decision? It is unfair that I am not given a choice to vote for the budget that the BOE has requested.

I urge you to advocate for the reinstatement of the \$2.5MM and if the LC does not reinstate any funds, please push for advisory questions to be placed on the referendum ballot so that the voter's voices could be heard. Particularly this year, a defeated budget does not mean that the voters want the school budget further reduced. I cannot in good conscious vote YES for the BOF-approved budget.

Is there a way for you to organize a town-wide PTA vote to assess the true desire of the PTA membership? I figured one meeting may be most convenient for many parents like me with multiple children in multiple schools. I think we could get through the votes for each individual school fairly quickly. We must act swiftly if we are act before the LC's final vote.

Please let me know if you have another plan.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Po Murray

Parent of four school aged children.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

As a Newtown parents, we are asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow us, the taxpayers, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for our children.

Kevin and Jennifer Barrett

66 Charter Ridge Drive
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

As a Newtown parent, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Lori Rohrbacher
8 Nighthawk Lane
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Council Members,

As a concerned parent who has 2 children in 2 different schools in Newtown, I would ask that you re-instate the 2.5 million dollars back into the education budget. I have attended several budget meetings and the educators & superintendent, have shown tremendous responsibility when it comes to the education budget.

Dr. Robinson has demonstrated ways that she and her staff have cut costs to the bare bones. While this budget process is continuing, she continues to try to find ways to cut cost. It is at a point where any more cutting will directly effect education. By simply re-instating the 2.5 million, we are just

maintaining the status quo. Lots of other cuts will continue to be made.

Whether you are for or against the school budget, I believe this effects every one of us, as a community. Without a good education infrastructure in a community, the whole community will suffer. I ask that you please re-instate the 2.5 million dollars to the education side of the budget.

Thank you for your consideration,

Pat Calabrese
9 Indian Hill Ln
Sandy Hook CT 06482

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

To the Members of the Newtown Legislative Council:

Mrs. Jan Andras, Mr. John Aurelia, Mr. George Ferguson, Mr. Kevin Fitzgerald, Mr. Gary Davis, Mrs. Mary Ann Jacob, Mr. Chris Larocque, Mr. Richard Woycik, Mr. Dan Amaral, Mr. James Belden, Mr Jeff Capeci, Mr Ben Spragg,

I am beseeching you, as a parent of three children in this school system, to please do whatever you can to restore funding to our education budget. Our children deserve to be taught and cared for properly. They need an education that will address their crucial and disparate needs to learn in an environment unencumbered by a lack of appropriate resources; large class sizes, no after school activities etc. Our country already shows an embarrassing rank in the world with regard to our education system. Newtown's funding per student is also sorely lacking already. Please do not take anything more away from our children. Stand up to these cuts, PLEASE!!

Miranda Pacchiana
21 Gelding Hill Rd.
Sandy Hook

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Hi:

As a Newtown parent, I am asking you to reinstate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Debra Nahmias
178 Walnut Tree Hill Rd.
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

As a Newtown grandparent, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my grandchildren.
marianne malkin

Address: 18 queen street
City: newtown
State: ct
Zip: 06470

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

TO THE TOWN COUNCIL: PLEASE reinstate the 2.5 million to the education budget.

???

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

To the Members of the Newtown Legislative Council:

Mrs. Jan Andras, Mr. John Aurelia, Mr. George Ferguson, Mr. Kevin

Fitzgerald, Mr. Gary Davis, Mrs. Mary Ann Jacob, Mr. Chris Larocque, Mr. Richard Woycik, Mr. Dan Amaral,

Mr. James Belden, Mr Jeff Capeci, Mr Ben Spragg,

Please restore funding to the Board of Ed Budget. Please let the voters decide! The children of Newtown deserve appropriate class sizes, after school activities and adequate teachers and space.

Additionally, I don't see any benefit to closing an elementary school.

Thank you,
Rachel Steinebrey
11 Cobblers Mill Rd
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

As a Newtown parent, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Julie Shull
20 Charter Ridge Dr.
Sandy Hook, CT 06482
March 17, 2010

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

To Councilmembers Amaral, Andras, Aurelia, Belden, Capeci, Davis, Ferguson, Fitzgerald, Jacob, Larocque, Spragg, and Woycik:

As a taxpayer and Newtown parent, I strongly urge you to reinstate the \$2.5 million dollars to the education budget and allow Newtown's voting citizens and taxpayers to vote for or against that budget. Newtown voters deserve the right to decide whether or not the budget is appropriate.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,
Lynn Edwards
3 Sand Hill Road
Sandy Hook

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget.

Sarah and Alex Hoffert
16 Marlin Road
Sandy Hook

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

As a Newtown parent, with four children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,
Nancy Dunn
7 Harvest Common

Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

As a Newtown parent, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Kristin Aug
60 Marlin Road
Sandy Hook, CT. 06482

XX

To the Legislative Council,

It is with great urgency and concern that I write to you as a tax payer in Newtown. At the most recent Board of Finance meeting a statement was made by John Kortze that 'it was not the role of their board to say what the individual taxpayers of Newtown could or could not afford', but in my opinion they did just that when they seemingly came up with an arbitrary figure to cut our Board of Education budget by \$2.5 million.

I strongly urge you as the governing body of Newtown to let the voters' voices be heard at the polls. I ask you to support the original budget proposed by the Board of Education (minus any savings that they are able to negotiate) and let us vote. If you present us with a budget that is substantially lower than our own Educators recommend to maintain our quality schools, than I and many others who support the original BOE budget have no recourse, no voice. We have no way to vote yes, that we are willing to pay for maintaining a quality education in Newtown; that we want to keep our quality teachers, our after school programs and our current bus drivers.

Please support the Board of Education since they are the 'experts' in the field of education and let the taxpayers have a chance to support a quality education. Let the voters' voices be heard.

Sincerely,

Lisa Berger
13 Monitor Hill Road
Newtown, CT

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

We cannot cut teachers to trim your budget. Please look elsewhere for your budget cut. I cannot imagine my two children being a class room size of thirty students. How are they supposed to learn? How is our kids supposed to rise up to the standard that the President is asking?

Look for other spending waste in Newtown such as the yearly money spent on maintaining FFH. Let some private investors develop Fairfield Hills. If we can't even provide the 2.5 million to our kids education, how we ever going to have the fund to develop FFH?

Please accept the BOE budget as presented.

Loanne Morris
4 Storm Ridge Rd
Newtown, CT 06470

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with three children, two currently in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,

Matthew F. Murphy
9 Chestnut Knoll Drive
Sandy Hook, Ct 06482
Carmel High School
Mathematics Department
XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with three children in the Newtown Public School system, I am asking that you re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children. Please consider re-instating the \$2.5 million to the education budget as a means to keeping the Newtown Public School system strong.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mara Street
48 Cobblers Mill Road
Sandy Hook, CT 06482
XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with three children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,

Cathy Roche
23 Valley View Rd
Newtown, CT 06470
XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with four children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Michele Payne
39 Tunnel Road
Newtown, CT 06470
XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with three children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,

Monica Crone
16 Budd Drive
Newtown, CT 06470
XX
Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with two children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,
Lynn Hungaski
29 Valley View Road
Newtown, CT 06470
XX
Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with three children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,
--

Amy Sullivan
11 Cider Mill Road
Sandy Hook Ct.
Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,
XX
Dear Members of the Legislative Council,

I'd like to share a video with you (below). It was created by my 12 year old son, Max who is currently a student at Newtown Middle School. This video won first place in the Reflections Contest at NMS and went on to win third place at the state level of competition. The theme for the contest, "BEAUTY IS..." presented an opportunity for Max to demonstrate that beauty can be found in things that are seemingly regular and mundane, or unique and unexpected. Max was also selected to participate in the Western Regions Music Festival, which brings together the most talented musical youth from across Connecticut to perform in unison. He is an honor role student and class representative.

Max is a direct result of a well rounded education that includes not only his core academic subjects, but art, music, and technology as well. Additionally, due to own own efforts, he has an advantage over most Newtown children because he was exposed to different languages and cultures since he was born building within him an understanding and acceptance of all walks of life. All these factors shape a child's mind and stay with them as they become adults, facilitating better, "out of the box" improvements to our lives.

Our son's talent and passions were lit and fueled by the people that make our schools desirable and unique. Though we are supportive of the arts and technology at home, it was not until some turning point moment in his school days that the desire to reach a new level was fostered and as a result, this is directing the course of his future career.

If you consider your daily lives, many of the decisions and purchases you make come from some form of compelling visual and musical representation. What inspires our eye, and stirs our emotion are brought to us by people who were once children provided with a well rounded education. More importantly, music, art and language study reorder the neurons of the brain to find different ways to present a message. In a volatile global climate, building common understanding among people of diverse opinions helps protect our country.

There is a story just like Max's in every child that we as a town support through our tax dollars. As a community member and tax payer, my financial commitment to another person child is honored when that child becomes a productive, well adjusted functioning member of society no matter what career path they choose. Our world is made up of a balance of people with diverse talents. All bring something unique to our lives. I cannot imagine a world that is black and white where we all work on an assembly line. Can you?

There is a movement that supports restoring funds and I ask you have a serious conversation as to the benefits. Please also hold our BOE accountable for using these funds to preserve the most valuable resource we have; the teachers who spend 1080 hours a year in direct, influential contact with our children and the programs that give Newtown students a competitive edge.

I also ask you to encourage the BOE to move more aggressively to act upon the strategic plan and share with the community the wonderful products of our school system on a consistent, year round basis. At budget time people can then vote with confidence and pride that their tax dollars have produced new citizens armed with 21st century skills, allowing our country to remain a global and financial superpower. Perhaps one of our students will be the one to have the creative solution for our own town's issues.

Please enjoy Max's video at this link. (switch to 480p below the video for optimal resolution) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyaqCy-PggI>

Thanks for listening,
Desiree Galassi

XX

As a Newtown parent, with 2 children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,
John F. Davin

15 Sweet Meadow Road
Newtown, CT 06470

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with three children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,

Nancy Depuy
5 Stonybrook Road
Newtown, Ct 06470

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with two children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,
Kim Pollard
31 Valley View Road
Newtown, CT 06470

XX

Dear Legislative Council Members,
Please allow the taxpayers in Newtown to make the decision on how our tax dollars are spent. The cuts to the school budget must have been very difficult to make, and there likely should be some made in this very poor economy, however it should be up to the citizens to decide if these cuts are warranted.

Please reconsider having a small group of elected officials make such an important decision on our behalf, without sending it out to a vote.

Thank you,

Ann Ziluck
61 Aunt Park Lane
Newtown, CT 06470

XX

I am writing to ask each of you to consider the proposed budget and to carefully consider what is being cut from education. I understand times are difficult and the last thing I want or need is for my taxes to increase. However, a great concern of mine, as a mother, is what is happening to the Newtown Public School system. The children of Newtown, especially the middle school students, need to have after school programs and activities available to them. Studies have shown that children do not feel connected to a school until after a three year period. As you know, this effects both our intermediate and middle school population. Most concerning is the later group, whom are often struggling with the teenage years and figuring out where they fit in within their peer group and society. I believe that by providing school related clubs, sports, and/or activities will allow them to feel more connected to their school and gives them a positive environment to grow as a person, student, and community member. After school programs can facilitate and improve academic learning, social skills/friendships, musical/art abilities, health/fitness and many other areas that keep our children focused on positive future goals. With all of the focus on CMT scores one could argue that if the middle school students feel connected to their school and enjoy their school experience that CMT scores will only improve. Being a School Psychologist in another district I understand the tough decisions that need to be made in the budget process. But, I also understand the issues that many middle school children face on a daily basis. Please keep in mind...it's ultimately the children of Newtown and their future that is being effected by your decisions.

Kristin Whelan, MS
School Psychologist
Stratford Board of Education
Wooster M.S./Nichols School

XX

I am distressed about the Board of Finance's recent demand for the schools to cut another \$2.5 million from the education budget and concerned about the affect this cut will have on the quality of education in Newtown.

The Board of Education worked hard on its budget and I urge you to support the original budget and trust the judgment of the BOE members.

Fiscal responsibility is one thing; cutting off our noses to spite our face is another. I don't think that the members of the Board of Finance are qualified to determine what is best for our educational system nor do they truly understand the implications of what they have done.

I urge you to reinstate the \$2.5 million to the education budget to maintain the quality of education in our town.

Joeline Wruck

6 Fairchild Road

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with one child in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sandra Bent

16 Bonnie Brae Drive

Newtown, CT 06482

XX

As you begin to deliberate on the budget, please consider reinstating the \$2.5M cuts currently proposed. As a tax payer and concerned parent, I feel these deep cuts will have a significantly negative impact on our educational system. Please reinstate the funds and allow the voters to decide on April 28th.

Bob & Lauren Elliott

34 Cobblers Mill Road

Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with two children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children. We can not allow the fear of the economy to prevent the educational opportunities my children deserve without the test of a vote.

Thank you for your consideration,

Bonnie Spies

5 Taunton Ridge rd

Newtown ct

06470

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with four children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,

Joseph Duffy

5 Thomas Circle
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

We are not in favor of the additional \$2.5 million cut proposed by the BOF. We are urging you to use your authority to restore these funds. Please allow us, the taxpayers, the opportunity to show our support for the original budget.

Thank you for your consideration,
Dan and Kris Cotton

28 Old Farm Hill Rd, Newtown

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent , with two children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,
Ingrid McClay

14 Dusty Lane

Newtown, CT 06470

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As Newtown parents, with three children in the Newtown public school system, we are asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget. We, as taxpayers, would appreciate the opportunity to vote on the budget as a means of providing a better education for our children.

We are troubled by the cuts that are already being made for both programs and staffing!

Thank you for your consideration,
Jennifer and Dan Kennedy

1 Pumpkin Lane

Newtown, CT 06470

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with two children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the tax payer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

We are new to the area and one, if not the, major factors for moving to Newtown was the high quality schools and the relatively small class sizes. The potential impact of these cuts is larger class sizes and lower quality education through fewer after school opportunities. These things are not wish list items, but critical to maintaining the high standard for which the Newtown Schools are known and the quality of the schools is a major factor when families are looking to move to a town.

Thank you for your consideration.

David E. Lyon
5 Silver City Road
Newtown, CT 06470

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,
As a parent of three children who have been or are being educated in the Newtown schools I would like to urge you to allow the tax payers to decide what they can afford by re-instating the \$2.5 million to the education budget and putting it to a public vote. I have already seen the loss of programs in this district for our students and do not want to see more. Please put this difficult decision in the hands of the community where it belongs. We need to respect the recommendations of the BOE.

John Spies
5 Taunton Ridge Rd
Newtown, Ct

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with two children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children. We moved to Newtown several years ago because of the high standards of education in this town, and now as my children move up through the grades I see that the pride that this town once placed in its' schools is no longer of importance. That is a shame. I see Newtown is not any different than the rest of the country, force something down the throat of the electorate without allowing a vote. Is this what our founding fathers planned. I think not.

Sincerely,
Mary Craig

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent with three children in the Newtown public school system, I ask that you re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget. Please allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,
Shannon Mulligan
10 Brennan Rd.

Newtown, CT 06470
XX

Thanks Mary Ann - I'm going to reply to you and the rest of the board, I hope you do not mind.

As you know, my husband and I are both teachers. When we looked for our first home 14 years ago the deciding factor for Newtown was the education system. Even though we had to move to a smaller home in Newtown than we could have in some other towns, we thought it was worth it. Now that we have two children in the system we have been nothing but pleased with the education they have received. However, we are already starting to see cuts that are affecting our children - most recently with the GATES program.

I feel strongly that a smaller class size is one of the major factors in increasing student achievement. I am quite concerned of the impact the class sizes that are being proposed are going to have, especially at Reed. Class size reduction has had numerous studies showing that when the class size is increased, test scores decline. This is just one of the many, many reasons to keep class size as low as possible. It has also been shown that when class

size at the primary grades is increased, student achievement decreases in the upper grades. One of the numerous studies on this information can be found here:

<http://news.msu.edu/media/documents/2009/10/4dc7ac16-dcd4-4525-9f1d-c324a4385f0f.pdf>

I am also concerned of the cuts to the arts programs. The arts programs are what keep some students motivated - I have seen it at the high school. Kids who find success with the arts may not excel in the academic classroom. This success builds up the confidence and determination in students who may otherwise not feel a reason to do well in school. As a community we should be promoting the arts, not lessening them to something trivial that can be discarded.

Finally, I am worried that once these changes are enacted, they will never be fixed. Newtown is going to lose to reputation for excellence in education that it once had. If anything, right now we should be striving to regain that excellence.

In looking at your spreadsheet, this is what I have found for our house:

Current taxes: \$5872.50

Taxes for BOF budget: \$6047.94 (+175.44 or an additional \$14.62/month)

Taxes for BOE budget: \$6213.37 (\$340.87 or an additional \$28.41/month)

Am I willing to pay less than \$1 more a day to support the BOE budget? You bet. Are others? Maybe not. But maybe they are.

So again, I ask that you put the BOE budget to a town vote.

Thank you,
Lisa Sheridan
6 Honey Lane
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

As a Newtown parent, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank You,
Sharon Vetrano
6 Camelot Crest
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

To the members of the legislative council, especially District 2 Gary Davis, Mary Ann Jacobs, Chris Larocque and Rich Woycik:

We are gravely concerned about the proposed \$2.5 million cut to the education budget. The thought of having classrooms of 27 and 28 children in the Reed and Middle Schools is chilling. If you have ever spent any time in these classrooms, you would know that the teacher then becomes 50% warden, 50% teacher. The impact on students (especially the "average" student, who receives no special support) will be measurable by CMT, SAT and ACT.

We understand that this is the most challenging year in recent budget history, but reductions to the point of educational staff loss should be avoided at all costs.

Eliminations of after school activities at K-6 would be unfortunate but manageable. At the Middle School, they would be bitter pills to swallow. But at the High School level, they would be completely unacceptable. As we all know, sports, clubs, and enrichment activities are an integral part of a young adolescent's development as an

students attending the schools or not, have a responsibility to its young students...a commitment to excellence. At the high school, we are already suffering from a lack of class offerings, disappointing support from the guidance dept due to an insufficient counselor:student ratio, and larger class sizes for some subjects. Further cuts intensify an already pressing problem. The Intermediate school and the Middle School are heading down the same road and the elementary schools are stretched to the limit.

I ask the Legislative Council to balance fiscal responsibility with quality education for our children. I ask that the LC restore \$2.5M to the budget, less any savings from "commodities" and redundant or obsolete courses (approx. \$1.2M).

I appreciate your dedication to this process and am hopeful a fair budget emerges that ensures quality education for all children in Newtown.

Sincerely,

Jane Audet

115 Alberts Hill Road

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

I would like to start off my letter to you folks by congratulating you all for stepping up to do what I know must be a very difficult job and one that I am sure you receive little thanks for. Having said that, you did step up, so I assume you wanted the challenge and are intelligent enough to cope with the burdens placed upon you. This is my first ever letter to the Legislative Council and I hope you take the time to consider my point of view.

As a parent of three children in Newtown who are 11, 8 and 5 I urge the Legislative Council to consider very carefully any further cuts to the education budget. One of the reasons (the only reason actually) we moved to Newtown in 2005 was for the reputation of the Newtown schools. We considered purchasing a house in Oxford, Monroe, Shelton or Southbury for what would have been considerably less money at the time, with considerably less property taxes, but what swayed our final decision was the Newtown schools. Whilst 2009 has been a brutally tough year financially for our family, with our family income down considerably, I still feel investing in the future education of our schools is the way forward for our town. Without proper funding, our schools will start failing our children. The excellent teachers we currently have will relocate and move on. Future parents will consider other towns to live rather than Newtown and slowly the tide will turn and we will cease to be the vibrant community we currently are. Please consider carefully the impact on all of us. Our property values will continue to fall and there will no longer be a desire to live here. I am not advocating a spend, spend, spend scenario and I do understand we need to balance the needs of all Newtown residents. I am often told that the parents do not show their support sufficiently well enough for the Legislative Council to understand their desire for a continuing and improved education for our children. Most parents, like me, are busy raising our children and find the whole process entirely confusing and somewhat misleading. Everybody has their own agenda and everybody wants a slice of the pie. I get that. I have not been able to attend meetings during the evening as I have a husband who travels and once again this week he is out of town on a trip to Germany. I therefore would not wish you to see my lack of attendance in any way a sign that I do not support the Newtown schools or the current education budget. I do not wish you to make any further cuts.

As a side note, I have attended conference today for my daughter. She is in kindergarten and doing extremely well, especially considering she is only in school for 2 ½ hours per day. I am amazed at how much kindergarten teachers cram into such a small time. We moved here from England, she would have been in full time school this year – it is still shocking to me that considering the United States considers itself to be a world leader, that your youngest citizens are not in full time school until six years of age. I left the meeting feeling somewhat happy and sad. Happy that my daughter is thriving and doing so well and sad that whilst walking through the school corridors I realized that her school may have to make cuts to teaching staff which will be based on tenure and not on quality of teaching. I understand this is contractual and Unionized, but again I find this completely amazing that again a country that considers itself a world leader would fire teachers who are outstanding and do a great job and maybe (I understand this is just a maybe) keep teachers on staff that maybe should retire, step down or move on as they have ceased to be the world class teacher they once were. That to me does not make sense. I think for the United States to claim its place as a world leader and to continue to dominate the world stage, it needs to reinvest in education and that should start with the teachers and schools. This town is a pleasant place to live, it was our choice to live here, but it will also be our choice to sell up and move on if we

allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my child.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Dave Erikson
5 Cadey Lane
Newtown, CT 06470
XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with two children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,
Lorine Watkins
149 Huntingtown Road
Newtown, CT 06470
XX

Dear Legislative Council Member,

Please read the attached letter from Karen Sherman and myself. We are teachers and department chairs at Newtown High School who are very concerned about the impact of the 2.5 million cut imposed on the education budget by the Finance Board.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns,
Jeanetta Miller
Karen Sherman

Jeanetta Miller
English Department Head
Newtown High School
Sandy Hook CT 06482
XX
23 March 2010

To the Members of the Legislative Council:

We have been teaching at Newtown High School for a collective total of fifty years, about half of that time also serving as department chairs. Jeanetta's sons graduated from Newtown High School and Karen's daughter teaches in the Math Department. Many of our former students have "come home" to Newtown as teachers and are giving back to the community that has served them. We have a longstanding investment in the success of Newtown's schools and a strong loyalty to our students and colleagues. Every year in Newtown since we can remember—which is decades—has been a lean budget year. Every year funds for the equipment and staffing that we need to develop and maintain strong programs have been cut. Every year we have had to make do with less than we need. The results of decades of under-funding are beginning to show up as we lag behind in technology, as deferred maintenance issues become human health issues and as our standardized test scores remain flat—a trend that is not shared by comparable school districts as evident in the fact that we have fallen over the last decade to the bottom of our DRG. It has taken this long for the impact of under-funding to be evident because of the people who work in our schools: teachers, administrators, secretaries, custodians. None

of us work in the Newtown Public Schools because of the pay or the perks; we choose to work here because of the caring, dedicated people we get to work with.

The 2.5 million cut imposed on the education budget by the Board of Finance has a human cost and a human face. The most recently hired teacher in the English department learned this week that her position will be taken by a middle school teacher whose position will be cut. Joanna Diaz has made tremendous progress in her first year of teaching. Her students enjoy their work with her, and she has won the hearts of her colleagues. Joanna balances high expectations with a caring attitude toward her students; she is everything we could wish for in a first-year teacher. When hiring a new math teacher, the committee takes into consideration not only a candidate's command of content and use of technology but their stance on education and dedication to young people. We look for individuals who will collaborate with the current staff, sharing ideas and offering suggestions for the good of all students. Finding a candidate with experience as well is a bonus. The math department found such a candidate in Leah Schultz. Leah is here early in the morning to meet with students or to collaborate with colleagues. She is excited about teaching and has offered many new and exciting lessons. I have witnessed how willingly students come to her for help and the ease of conversation between student and teacher. She is a valued member of the department who shares our philosophy and dedication to the mission of Newtown High School. Joanna and Leah are representative of all the teachers who make Newtown a place where families want to live because of the quality of the schools.

In last week's Newtown Bee it was suggested that the 2.5 million cut could be made up through adjustments in "commodities," such as insurance and fuel, and reductions in staff. We would like to see the entire 2.5 million restored to the education budget. If that is not possible, we urge the members of the Legislative Council to make a firm distinction between commodities and people because we can't continue to provide a quality education when teachers are treated like furniture. The people of Newtown have trusted us for many years to provide an excellent education for their children and we have fulfilled that trust. We believe that voters will support the bare bones budget originally approved by the Board of Education. Please restore the 2.5 million cut by the Board of Finance and give the voters a chance to show their support for Newtown's teachers.

Karen Sherman, Math Department Chair
Jeanetta Miller, English Department Chair
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Hello,
I am not able to attend the Legislative Council public hearing on March 25 due to family commitments, so I am writing to you all to make my voice heard.

PLEASE DO NOT REDUCE THE EDUCATION BUDGET FOR NEWTOWN. Newtown schools cannot maintain their current quality (to say nothing of improving quality) without a decent budget. I understand that the budget increase proposed by the BOE would increase my taxes by roughly \$125. I can easily live with that increase and would vote for a budget that included their proposed number. What I cannot live with is our schools losing the money they need to provide my children a quality education.

If you don't have children in the schools, then please protect the education budget out of an interest in your own property value, as you must know that school quality and property value are closely linked. If you don't care about your own property value, then please do it out of a sense of pride in and civic responsibility for this town. I am begging you - **DO NOT CUT THE EDUCATION BUDGET!**

Thank you for reading this email and for your continued service to this town. I know your jobs are not easy and I do appreciate your hard work. Have a great day.

Dory

Dory Bertsche, LLC
216 Brushy Hill Road
Newtown, CT 06470
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Claudia Mitchell – 8 Budd Drive - Newtown, CT 06470

March 25, 2010

Dear Legislative Council Members,

It is a sad day for us in Newtown - a day when the education budget is in jeopardy of being reduced by an amount that will have a profound effect on every student in our school system. This is not the first year of underfunding. Each year the impact becomes greater.

In our Middle School, a building that has been constantly ignored on all levels, proposed cuts are devastating. In this year 2010, our computer Technology Program, along with the Consumer Science Program, and an entire cluster of 4 teachers, as well as a language teacher are all threatened. The rationalization for these cuts is that kids get these subjects at the Reed school or will have the opportunity to select them at the high school level or that the class sizes will not increase that much. What happens to student learning when there is a two year gap? As for enrollment, we already have a few more students enrolled for next year and this number always gets higher as school nears opening in September. What is happening here?

As I sat at the Board of Ed meetings, I heard consistent pleas from the taxpaying parents to present the town with a real budget and let the people decide. However, their voice was not heard.

It is time for our townspeople to be able to vote on the budget as the Board of Ed presents it and have the chance to say yes or no. Then we could go forward together with that decision, whatever it might be, making this town a better place to live and raise our children.

Why don't we have advisory questions which would allow the public to express their wishes as to whether the budget amount should be increased or decreased? Yes, these are hard times; but this is not a poor town.

Please do not feel the need to answer this letter. Please pass it on to the other members of the Council as you make this very important decision. Good luck to all of you.

Very Sincerely Yours,

Claudia Mitchell
8 Budd Drive – Newtown
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with two children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,
Susan MacMullan
12 Fox Run Lane South
Newtown, CT 06470
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

I'd like you to consider adding \$1.5M back into the BOE budget. I understand from Janet Robinson that the BOE can manage to absorb \$1M of the additional \$2.5M cut made by the Finance Board without directly impacting students. However, beyond that the students will be affected.

As a voter and a tax payer I am requesting these funds be restored and let the citizens of Newtown decide on whether or not the minor tax increase is tolerable.

Jackie Horkachuck

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with three children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children.

Thank you for your consideration,

Stacey Premus 33 Horseshoe Ridge Road Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XX

Dear members of the Legislative Council,

As president of the Hawley PTA and a Newtown resident, I would like to say that I appreciate all of the people who make personal sacrifices and volunteer their time to the various boards in town. The thoughts and suggestions below come from me, **as a parent and homeowner**, who lives in District I.

Over the past couple of weeks I have explained to many of my friends that I fully understand the notion that the BOE budget should be reduced a certain amount due to better rates obtained on gas/diesel, electricity, health insurance, etc. between the budget's inception and its presentation to the BOF. My personal notes from the BOF meeting show that suggested number is roughly \$1.4M. I believe if the superintendent and BOE were to start from scratch today to create their proposed budget they would incorporate these lower rates. However, I would caution you to take into consideration the risk factors involved with using the maximum dollar amount associated with those items. I'm not sure what the right number would be, but would assume it falls somewhere between the \$700K the BOE feels is prudent and the \$1.4M quoted by the BOF. It frightens me to think of what will happen mid year if there is a shortfall. For example, if we use more electricity than predicted, from where will that money come?

Personally, I would prefer to see the entire \$2.5M restored to the BOE budget because anything we save due to the diligent efforts of our superintendent and the BOE could be used to benefit our children. That said, I'm a realist and believe that's not going to happen. I've actually heard there are some sitting on the LC who feel the \$2.5M is fair and, perhaps, even too little. There is a real fear out there that the budget will be reduced even further. Year over year we have seen budgets pass that are sub-standard.

I ask you to think of this: In the same way a NO vote does not always mean, "I think this budget is too high", neither does a YES necessarily mean, "I'm happy with this budget". It is my understanding that if the NO votes win, it is assumed voters feel the budget is too high and the result will be a reduction to the proposed budget. If that is the case, then shouldn't you hold off on any reductions until if/when that happens?

By reducing it **before** the referendum, you will essentially take away our choice and our voice. Those of us who like the budget just fine as it stands today will be forced to vote YES for the simple fact that we would be doing what we have to do to avoid further reductions.

Please let the **voters** decide if the proposed budget works for us.

Thanks for listening,
Marabeth Pereira
33 Pocono Rd
Newtown

XX

Legislative Council Members,

I have sent a similar email to the Board of Education recently. I am hoping that you will consider putting money back into

I urge you to put the 2.5 million dollars that was cut from the education budget back. Newtown has been able to pride itself over the years for offering a great education to students with superlative programs, at an impressively low per pupil spending rate. This has been a draw for people to move to Newtown. These cuts dramatically effect the programs Newtown has to offer students. The raise in class size will also effect the quality of education for our children. Our children's education is important. I urge you to restore the funds that were reduced by the Board of Finance and put the money back into our school system. Let the people in our town have the opportunity to vote on the education budget without further reductions.

Sincerely,
Pamela Kohn

Newtown Resident for 30 years.

XX

Dear Legislative Council and Board of Education Members,

An additional topic has been brought to my attention.

We strongly agree that the referendum include **advisory questions**.

For "No" voters, wording such as *"Shall the budget amount of \$xxxxxxx be increased?"* and *"Shall the budget amount of \$xxxxxxx be decreased?"* provides an opportunity for voters to guide you as you work through the process on our behalf.

Thank you again for all your hard work and for considering our opinion.

Lisa and Stephen Chaloux
33 Old Green Road
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XX

To the Members of the Newtown Legislative Council:

I am writing to urge you to vote at your next meeting to reinstate the \$2.5 million to the Board of Education budget. Please let your constituents vote on the budget with those funds in the BOE budget. I believe the citizens of this town deserve the chance to vote their conscience.

One of the main reasons my family moved to Newtown 6 years ago was because of the good reputation of this school system. We moved here from another state and the first criteria we examined when planning the move was the school system because we have school-age children. We tried to find a home in Ridgefield because we were so impressed with that town's schools, but we found we were unable to afford the real estate there. Our next choice was Newtown because at that time, the school system looked excellent. We have been appalled to watch each year as this town seems to relish in chipping away at what we consider to be the cornerstone of a community, the school system. Our children are the future of our community and of our nation. Their future depends on us doing what is in their best interest, on doing what is right, even when it may be painful for us. We feel that the one area that cannot be compromised is our children's education.

Please reinstate the \$2.5 million to the Board of Education's budget. Our children are counting on you to do the right thing for them. Your constituents are counting on you to do the right thing and allow us to vote on this budget with the \$2.5 million reinstated to the BOE.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,

D. Jane Porter,
Sandy Hook resident

XX

To all Council Members,

I will not be able to attend the pulbic hearing on the budget tomorrow, but would like to inform you that my husband and I completely agree with and support the recommendation of the Board of Finance to cut the Board of Education budget by \$2,500,000.

We DO NOT want any of the money restored.

We think Pat Llodra and the Board of Selectmen, John Kortze and the Board of Finance have done an outstanding job with budget. We are pleased that Pat has been very pro-active in consolidating services and negotiating better prices for commodities, rather than just cutting services, salaries and personnel.

I hope the Council will support the Board of Finance recommendation.

Thanks,

Carey Schierloh
6 Shady Rest Blvd
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XX

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please preserve the nurse's position at St. Rose School. The presence of a nurse on the school premises for the entire school day is essential for the health and safety of the students.

A nurse ensures quick response to any injury or illness that befalls a child. This is especially important for children with asthma, allergies, diabetes and other medical needs for whom an ordinary day could quickly become life threatening. The nurse also provides the oversight and education/communication functions necessary to prevent and/or contain epidemic outbreaks of communicable diseases and conditions. In addition, the administrative role of meeting state mandated medical records requirements is huge. All these needs must continue to be met.

The bulk of the students at St. Rose are Newtown residents and their parents pay their full share of town taxes while consuming the merest fraction of the budget allocated for education. We are not all well-to-do. The loss of the nurse's position at St. Rose School would surely place additional financial burden on the school and therefore the parents of the students there.

Finally, it would seem equitable that the citizens who send their children to St. Rose School should have the same services and protections that are afforded to those who send their children to the public schools. Providing for the health and safety of all the children in town should be a Newtown priority.

Thank You,
Theresa Ludanyi
40 Old Bethel Road
Newtown, CT 06470

XX

Hi Kevin,

I won't take up to much of your time. I know you understand the issues and what's at stake. I do want to officially urge you to vote to restore the entire 2.5 million dollars back to the education budget. Since I moved to Newtown, the government has been eroding its support for education. Every year we are told "we have to tighten the belt, "accept this budget or we will cut more," "we have to defer maintenance," etc. etc. Education has given up enough. The town has found money for manners of boondoggles. I am of the mind that this no longer happens on the back of education.

Of course my selfish reasons for this stance are that I have children in elementary school, but honestly, can any town survive let alone thrive without a good school system. The schools are the life force of a town. If our children are not sufficiently educated, and if they are not engaged in constructive, life affirming activities, the entire community suffers. Yes I want a proper education for my children, but I also want to protect the value of my home. If you want to keep Newtown a desirable place to live, you must sustain its school system.

I urge you to vote to restore all the money to the budget and use your communication skills and affecting congeniality to compell your colleagues to do likewise.

Thank you.

Martin and Barbara Blanco.

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

As a Newtown parent, with 2 children in the Newtown public school system, I am asking you to please re-instate the \$2.5 million to the education budget and allow me, the taxpayer, to vote on that budget as a means of providing a better education for my children and the families in our town.

Thank you for your consideration,

Carin and Thomas Newman
9 Bonnie Brae D

XX

Dear Legislative Council Members,

First, let me thank you for being a volunteer on a very difficult committee. I appreciate all of the time you donate to the town of Newtown in hopes of making it a better place to live.

Second, I would like to voice my concerns about the education budget and ask that one million dollars be put back in and not the whole 2.5 million that many are asking since 1.5 million was found that can be cut that won't affect the children. Both of my children go to Head O' Meadow school and we are currently losing two teachers due to low enrollment in our incoming first and second grade classes which I understand. However, if we lose another million, there is talk of losing a third teacher which will affect our children. Head O' Meadow also lost many educational assistants for next year too and the loss of these EA's will greatly affect our reading recovery program, of which my daughter benefitted from and my son still benefits from in school. I would hate to see HOM lose anymore, so I am requesting that you consider re-instating the one million dollars back into the school budget and if possible, the EA's too.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and listen to my concerns.

Yours truly-
Patty Cheh

XX

Hello

I am writing to express my concern about the Board of Education budget reductions and the effect that these cuts will have on each school. I have two children in the school system, one at Middle Gate and one at Reed Intermediate School. I am an active member of the school community and have seen firsthand how our decisions as a town impact the staff, programs, morale and children. I am more than willing to accept the proposed education budget because it makes sense. When we reduce and reduce, we rarely take steps to move education funding back to a healthy level. We need to maintain the teaching staff and decent class sizes after so many years of reductions.

I feel that cutting After-School Programs will have a negative impact that no study, discussion or amount of meetings will be able to fix. Children currently have a fairly even playing field when it comes to participating in activities such as the Interact Club, Respect, Responsibility and Diversity Club, Student Council, Yearbook or School Newspaper. If asked to pay even more to fund these programs (we are already paying fees for many programs), many kids will not have an option for after school and will instead head home to often empty households or to gather in town. Clubs will become an elite circle, when they should provide all children with opportunities to play a larger role in their school, meet others with like interests and contribute to the community.

If we are to ask our students (and their parents) to do their best and make Newtown a better place by producing strong test scores and contributing to the reputation that makes our town a desirable place to live, then we must give them the education to do just that. I ask the Legislative Council to consider reinstating some or all of the funds back to the BOE budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Heather Smith
22 Wills Road
Newtown, CT 06470

XX

Dear Legislative Council Members,

I know there is a meeting tonight, but I will not be able to attend. I wanted to thank you for your hard work and for always looking out for all of Newtown. I applaud your efforts and appreciate the difficult decisions and cuts you have made. Don't give in to the pressures from the BOE supporters who may want you to restore funds. I feel you have all been fair and have done your due diligence.

Thank you, Anna Wiedemann

XX

Dear Legislative Council Members,
As a voter and taxpayer, \$2.5M in cuts is too much! Anywhere we can realistically project savings on "commodities" by renegotiating, changing providers etc., we should. Based on what has been presented in meetings, I am asking that LC add \$1.2M back into the education budget (or \$2.5M less commodities savings).

I appreciate your dedication to this process and am hopeful a fair budget emerges that ensures QUALITY education for all children in Newtown.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Adis
4 Lafayette Trail
Newtown, CT

XX

Dear LC members:

I moved to Newtown 10 years ago with the hope that I would be fortunate enough to raise my family in a great town with a quality and SUPPORTED school system. While taxes certainly do not decrease no matter what, the support for schools has decreased. I feel as if I pay more, but am getting less concerning the education for my children. I believe that we need to responsibly fund our schools and I will support a tax increase as long as I believe that those responsible for providing education have done their due diligence. I believe that has been the case this year, and will be for years to come because we as a public should demand to know and see where our money is going. Please consider reinstating some funding for our school system and place this decision in the hands of the public.

Thank you for your time, consideration and representation.

Mark Gerace
23 Hall Lane

XX

Dear Legislative Council Members:

I am a 12 year resident of Newtown and am deeply upset about the deep cuts made to the education budget by the Board of Finance. I am asking you to please restore the 2.5 MM and allow us, the Newtown taxpayers, to decide at the voting booth.

I am very concerned about the lasting impact these cuts will have on the quality of education in Newtown. Education should always be our first priority. Our children are the future! In 2008 Newtown was ranked 137 out of 166 Connecticut school districts in per pupil expenditures yet we are ranked 33rd in the State for wealth. We are headed in the wrong direction; especially when road repair and burying utility poles at Fairfield Hills are a priority over the education of our children.

Please stand up for the children of Newtown. I urge you to reinstate the 2.5 MM to the education budget. I have faith in all of you to do the right thing.

Sincerely,

Anne Spillane
15 Washington Ave
Sandy Hook

XX

Dear Legislative Council Members,

My husband and I would like you to reinstate the \$2.5MM to the Board of Education budget at the March 25th Public Hearing.

I have had the pleasure of attending almost all of the meetings on the BOE

budget to date. Both Dr. Robinson and the BOE have worked diligently to prepare a budget that continues the district's goals while not compromising the integrity or quality of our children's education.

The recommendation by the Board of Finance to cut an additional \$2.5MM will only hurt our children, our district and our entire community.

We also ask the following of the Legislative Council:

- In addition to reinstating the \$2.5MM and allowing the voters to decide what budget they would like to see passed, please add simple, clear questions at the vote such as "If you voted no, shall the LC increase the budget total?", "If you

voted no, shall the LC decrease the budget total?". These questions will help clarify the final point of view of the voters/taxpayers.

- Investigate better tax revenue generating opportunities for our town. Taxpayers can not be the only ones supporting our town's budgets. Industry, business, etc. must be brought in to offset the continuously increasing taxes. Newtown is no longer the "quaint, small town one would drive to on a Sunday afternoon".

- Remember that in this troubled, national and global economic situation, education is often the one program that families turn to for an anchor for their

kids. Cutting teachers and programs creates more of an unstable environment. Many times both parents are suddenly unemployed or working multiple jobs to make

ends meet so they are depending on the schools to continue stable, fulfilling educational programs that keep their kids motivated and focused and give them hope for the future.

Thank you for your time. To reiterate, give the people back their right to vote on an educational budget that they believe is right for their children.

Thank you,
Glenn and Kinga Walsh
21 Horseshoe Ridge Rd
Sandy Hook

XX

To the Legislative Council,

It is very unfortunate that the state of the world economy is such that we must effect financial changes. That being said, we, as citizens and taxpayers, must agree that it is not time to think of conducting business as usual. Changes and budget reductions are in order!! There can be no sacred cows,...not for this year or many years to come. Please perform your fiscal responsibility for the greater community and tighten the budget on all areas including the education budget. In regard to the BOE budget, we must accept ideas like "pay for play" and a reduction or elimination of "special after school" programs! I say this even though I have a first grader in school today! Additionally, we must all recognize that the state is not going to be there for us for some time, and the health care law will siphon off even more of their budget.

Thank you,
Richard C.Christopher

XX

Dear Members,

Please restore the budget to its original content.

My children all benefited from using this school system, and we paid the increases in taxes as they came, understanding that it was necessary to maintain the integrity of our schools. I am deeply saddened by the current condition of the budget, because I feel that this is the beginning of the end, that these deep cuts now will only get deeper each year, and it is the children who will suffer in the long run. I never thought I would see the day that Newtown would be cutting programs. And yet, here we are.

Thank you for all the time, attention and consideration you put in as board members. I am quite certain that this is a very difficult time for all of you as well.

Sincerely,

Terri Greenfield
24 Marlin Road
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XX

Dear Members of the Legislative Council,

I am unable to attend this evening's public hearing, but would like to share my comments via email. As a voting taxpayer, I would support an increase to the budget proposed by the Board of Finance. It is my understanding that around \$1.3 million of the \$2.5 million was based on costs negotiated between the time the Board of Education presented its budget and the time the BoF held its final deliberation meeting. I would support a reinstatement of part of the \$1.2 million. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Stacie Doyle

XX

I have 2 children at St Rose School in Newtown... PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE do not cut the budget for our school nurse.. My son has been in the office 3 x's this year and needed a loving person to help while he was crying waiting for me to get home from work in Norwalk to pick him up. Our nurse is wonderful and we need to keep her and will be devastated if this job is eliminated from the budget.

I hope you make the right choice which will be in the best interest of St Rose's children. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Susan Dorazio
6 Shadow Ridge Circle
Newtown, CT

XX

Dear Mr. Fitzgerald,

Sarito Chandler was kind enough to share with me, your letter to her regarding the proposed budget cuts for the school system. I am attaching my own that I would like you to share with the other members of the Council before tonight's meeting.

Thank you for your efforts in trying to keep our school system of the highest caliber.

Sincerely, Claudia Mitchell
Claudia Mitchell – 8 Budd Drive - Newtown, CT 06470

XX

Dear Legislative Council and Board of Education Members,

I am writing to express my concerns for the possible cuts that will eliminate the full-time nurse at St. Rose School. St. Rose services over 400 children in our district which undeniably alleviates the public schools of approximately 40-45 students per grade level K-8. That's two classrooms at each grade level. As a parent of both a Head O Meadow student and a St. Rose student, and a taxpayer in Newtown, I ask that you reconsider the cuts that will eliminate the full-time nurse at St. Rose and put our children at risk. I also ask that you consider the costs that further cuts to the budget will have on our public school

programs and on the education our children will receive. I urge you to work diligently toward the best possible budget that will maintain an excellent quality education for all students in Newtown. Your time and efforts in doing the best you can for the youth of our community are greatly appreciated. As a parent and taxpayer, I thank you for your careful consideration of my concerns and of the education budget as a whole.

Sincerely,
Kristen Renzi

XX

I am witting to support the cuts that the board of finance worked so hard to find. I am appalled that this superintendent is giving so much miss-information to boards and public alike. Once again she set her sights on getting rid of the Owner/Operator school bus system by giving false and miss-leading information to all the PTA folks to get everyone riled up. Last year we were all told the entire administration would not take their pay raise. After getting wage freezes from several groups in the school system including ALL the owner operators, (we all lost three days pay on top of the freeze) the administration all took their raises Plus-the top wage earners received stipends and bonuses.

In the budget book there is \$250,000. To replace the computers at the Reed school that are six years old. Why cannot these computers just be re-formatted and Windows re-installed? The school system already owns the license for the windows software (that is listed in the budget also). In these poor economic times, it just seems like they think they already have the money for everything but it is just still in our pockets. Thank you for your time-Philip Carroll

XX

Dear Legislative Council Members,

I very much appreciate the valuable service you are providing to our community by serving on our Legislative Council. It is a very difficult time to be faced with such serious budget issues and with the resultant implications.

The economy has impacted most, if not all, of us. I believe however that it is important to look at the big picture to ensure that we do not lose sight of who we are as a community and what we value. The cuts made by the Board of Finance to the education budget will be significantly detrimental not just for the coming year, but the damage will be long lasting and extremely difficult to recover from. Just one year of a child getting lost in a large class is a year of learning that he or she can not get back. Please consider the long term impact on our community when you deliberate, and please restore the funds cut by the Board of Finance and let the voters decide.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Joan Plouffe
9 Sturges Rd.
Newtown

XX

Dear members of the Legislative Council,

As president of the Reed PTA and a Newtowner, I have been thrust knee deep into this budgetary and legislative process. As a working parent and a volunteer, I appreciate and applaud all the people who make personal sacrifices and volunteer their time to the various boards in town. This letter expresses the views and feelings first as a parent and then as a resident of Sandy Hook.

A good education is key to our children's future. If we expect our children to be equipped with the right tools to become the future leaders in our community and our country, we need to educate them the right way and not take short-cuts in getting there. The United States is a Super Power country, yet our education system is lagging behind other countries such as Japan, China and even India (who is considered a "Third World"

Country). Newtown is considered to have one of the best school systems in the State of Connecticut, yet we are lagging behind according to State Standards. Despite being aware of these gaps, we keep chipping at one of the most fundamental components that would keep our children educated and our country competitive.

Two years ago, we purchased our family residence in Newtown, not because of the price of the homes but because of our **number one priority**, the Education System. We looked at many towns, but were attracted to Newtown because of the quality of the education system. When I hear from a member of the Board of Finance say that, "the homes sales are not tied to education", I am disheartened and have to wonder what planet he is living on.

I have made many sacrifices and will not compromise on my children's education. Students in other countries have surpassed students in the U.S. I understand the economic climate is not as healthy as is used to be. I work for a very large corporation and have seen many colleagues and friends get laid off, but I have also seen many of them get rehired or hired elsewhere. I know that many people, if not everyone is suffering from the economic climate, but we should not sacrifice educating our children well.

Ask yourself this question, how are poor countries able to educate and push their children to succeed? These are the same children who become successful in fields that our children should be successful in. Then, we complain that our jobs are being taken by foreigners. We find ways to blame other and not ourselves.

I implore you to stop the fleecing of our children's education. Stop the dismantling of our education system. Put back the money in the Board of Education Budget that is so critical in educating our children. Give us visibility into spending and tax increases.

Do not take away our choice and our voice. Please let the voters decide if the proposed budget works for us.

Sincerely,

Satra Sampson-Arokium
38 Bradley Lane
Sandy Hook, CT
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
To: Legislative Council Members,

I think that the Board of Finance did a terrific job in working on the budget and making some tough decisions. I hope you all agree and vote to move their budget (as proposed) to the public for referendum. I know that you usually hear from people that have complaints rather than those that agree with the budget as proposed, but I have spoken to many people who are thrilled with the Board of Finance's budget. I think that it is generally human nature for those who have complaints to speak out while those with praise stay silent. I hope you will consider this while making your decision. Thank you for your service to Newtown.

Sincerely,

Barbara Bloom
25 Philo Curtis Rd.
Sandy Hook

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Dear Legislative Council Members-

To begin, thank you for all the time and effort you put in to make Newtown the best it can be. The number of hours you volunteer is incredible and I know the decisions you make are not easy.

I write this afternoon specifically to request that you reinstate the 2.5 million that has been cut from the education budget. We can not continue to cut the education budget in Newtown and provide the children a quality education. I

understand these are difficult times, but a solid education is important and if we continue to widdle away at the foundation we have created in this town, the school systems are going to come tumbling down.

I also ask you consider including an advisory question on the referendum..."Should the budget be increased \$???" and "Shall the budget be decreased\$???" so if the budget is not passed, you know why and can proceed accordingly.

Thank you for your consideration!

Kim Duffy
4 Chestnut Knoll Dr
Sandy Hook

XX

Dear Newtown Legislative Council Members,

I know there is an important meeting tonight and I hope you will do the right thing and decide to reinstate the \$2.5 million to the education budget. It is important for our house values to maintain a quality education, our community to ensure our young people have quality educations and can contribute productively when they graduate and our children , so they will have options that are available for well educated individuals.

Bonnie Spies

XX

My husband and I moved to Newtown two years ago. A large portion of our decision to move was based on our opinion of the local school system. We chose Newtown for the quality of education provided to the students. Please help maintain this quality by keeping the 2.5 million dollars, the BOF has proposed cutting, in the BOE budget. We have three children starting in the schools in the next two years and are greatly distressed to hear what is being considered for the district.

Sincerely,
Hillary Lewis

XX

25 March, 2010

Mr. Jeff Capeci
Chairman
Legislative Council

Dear Jeff:

Personal prior commitments prevent me from attending your meeting tonight to hear public input on this most important deliberation of the Council. I am therefore forwarding to you the gist of the comments I would have made were I able to attend. I plan to email these comments to my District 1 Council representatives and to you and would appreciate it if you could have them forwarded to the members from the other Districts.

Mr. Chairman, we live in unusual times. We are faced with grave difficulties at three different levels of government. Nationally, we are collectively suffering through the worst economic contraction since the Great Depression of the 30's. Unemployment is very high. The two most important industries in our nation – housing and autos – are exceedingly weak. Our Federal deficits are monumental – and rising. Currently our Congress is politically very divided on major initiatives. Home foreclosures are crushingly high and show no signs of ameliorating. Many households are facing actual financial ruin. Our national debt is being purchased by nations who are not exactly friendly toward us and can stop purchasing that debt at any time resulting in huge increases in interest payments to entice buyers. Cola increases to seniors have already been stopped for this and perhaps next year. Corporate bankruptcies and reduced, if not eliminated, dividend payments to shareowners are a way of life resulting in actual reduced income for many. In fact the World economy is at best very weak.

At the CT State level we have a similar situation. Our state legislators and our executive branch cannot balance our state budget. We have significantly reduced aid to towns and cities from Hartford. We continue to have unfunded mandates placed upon educational and municipal entities. We have staggering underfunded state obligations for pensions and medical benefits. We continue to have an “unfriendly” atmosphere for business in spite of what some politicians say. Unemployment in our state is very high. Wage increases are hard to come by and for many it has resulted in actual decreases. Home foreclosures are very high. The number of housing starts is almost non-existent. Sales of existing home stocks are very slow and inventories are correspondingly high. In fact the housing inventories are worse than it appears because many people have taken their homes off the for sale lists.

Mr. Chairman, this is the atmosphere that we find ourselves in when considering the current proposal. Respectfully I would say to you and the rest of the Council that a proposed 3 % tax increase is unacceptable.

Mr. Chairman, when the proposal before you is for a tax increase which at the same time includes an increase in spending it is representative of a world that is not the one we live in at this time.

Many will and have spoken eloquently about the wonderful and improved aura of cooperation between the Town and Education sides of our budget. And I must admit that it is much better than it has been in the past. I applaud the desire and skill of our First Selectman to create a more harmonious and cooperative atmosphere. But Mr. Chairman, we still end up with a tax increase!

Many on the education “side” of the budget will speak frequently about the impact of “cuts.” This outcry has been going on for years. Mr. Chairman, in all the research I have done and the absolute knowledge I have there has never – never – been a “cut” from budget to budget in the operating budget of the Board of Education. I do not know what may have occurred in the 1930’s but in the last eleven years there has not been a single year where the year over year education operating budget has been a reduction. In fact the average increase over the last eleven years in the operating education budget has been 6.3%. So these so-called “cuts” that are spoken of are either disingenuous or an outright falsehood. We cannot make true progress by masking the real problems. This is not to say that some educational needs are not real. Conversely, on the Municipal side of the budget in the last eleven years there have been two years where the operating budget was actually reduced from the prior year. Those years were fiscal 3/4 and 9/10. Each “side” has legitimate needs that must be looked at in light of our ability to fund through taxation.

Mr. Chairman, it is very sad indeed to say but our collective problem – on a National, State and local level – can be identified with one word: S-P-E-N-D-I-N-G.

I do not profess to be an expert but our personal experience is instructive: When our revenues drop we either go into debt or reduce our spending! On a municipal level our budgetary “system” is not that complicated. We have revenues which include State monies, we have a change in our Grand List (which can be considered “growth”) and we have expenditures. Our expenditures when combined with reduced revenues and a very slight increase in our Grand List (.26%) have increased year over year. To ask taxpayers to pay more in taxes when expenditures are not even being held let alone reduced is an invitation for a rejection by the people. We cannot vote on a federal budget or even a State budget but we sure can vote at a referendum on a local budget. And as you know there have been years that four referenda were required to pass a budget (FY 7/8). A rejection by the people is painful on two fronts: The process comes back to the Council for modifications with its additional costs to hold another vote and it signals that the Council is not in tune with the people and their perception of what is real.

Mr. Chairman, the Council’s responsibilities in these matters are truly burdensome. The Town Charter obligates you and your members to use good judgment in your deliberations and to fold into the equation the capacity of people to bear these financial and social burdens. Only the Council can meld all these factors into a final decision which will then move to the people. We cannot and should not forsake our obligation as citizens,

parents, taxpayers and officials to be prudent in our financial discipline. If we cannot set an example for ourselves to live by then who can?

I wish you and your colleagues the best in your deliberations.

Respectfully and most sincerely,

Paul J. Mangiafico
15 Kent Road
Newtown, CT 06470

XX

Dear Representative;

I am writing you regarding your upcoming deliberation on the town budget and to ask that you do everything you can to prudently limit the increase in our town budget. More specifically I believe the First Selectman and her department managers have done an admirable job of keeping their expenses down. Further I commend the actions and hard work of our Board of Finance.

I believe the proposed budget of the Board of Education needs to be constrained and hope that the Superintendent of Schools can look at her operations with a fresh perspective. Some extra thought must be given to reinventing how our education system operates. It is troubling that the first thing town residents hear is cuts to extra-curricular activities for our youth without other options for consideration.

The Board of Education and the Superintendent need to consider new ways to allocate their existing resources and limit their request for spending. If we are going to experience declining enrollment in our schools, care must be taken to review how education services are delivered and investments are made in all areas of the education budget. We cannot continue to cut the Board of Selectmen side of the budget.

With declining tax revenues, increased home foreclosures and high levels of unemployment, we need to see creative solutions for the education budget which takes two-thirds of every tax dollar.

I truly appreciate your time and effort to work on these difficult issues.

Tom Long
3 Birch Rise Drive
Newtown, Ct 06470

XX

Dear LC Members,

We are writing to you so that you know where our opinion stands with regards to the upcoming budget discussions and vote.

We would ask that you use your Authority and increase the budget by at least \$1.2M as it pertains to BOE.

We know the BOF, in an Advisory role, reduced the BOE budget by \$2.5M. There has been much discussion around the fact that possibly \$1.3M of the reductions have already been found without any damage to school programs and without any further teacher reductions. Assuming that to be true, we are asking you to vote to increase the budget by the remaining \$1.2M.

To even begin to consider after school programs being cut/reduced is extremely concerning to us. The BOE budget supports approximately 5000 children. The health of our school district, particularly relative to surrounding communities, has a direct bearing on all our home values. We must not let are district go backwards.

Specific to the potential cutting of after school activities, I would estimate that those activities probably impact 2000 children. Has anyone gone over the entire townside part of the budget and looked at the various departments and

measured how many Newtowners are impacted by each program? If you were to look at each department, I think you would find a few, that while may be well intentioned, end up serving a much smaller number of Newtown residents than say the after school programs offered by our school district.

Please allow my neighbors and your constituents to vote on the budget as proposed by the elected BOE officials. They worked hard to come up with a budget and as taxpayers, we should be given the ability to vote on that budget and not one that was considerably reduced from an Advisory group.

Sincerely,
Mike and Jill Mossbarger
2 Somerset Lane
Sandy Hook

XX

Dear Legislative Council Members-

I would like to begin by thanking you for all the time and effort you put in as members of the Legislative Council. The number of hours you volunteer is amazing and I know the decisions you make are never easy.

I write this evening specifically to request that you reinstate the 2.5 million that has been cut from the education budget. We can not continue to cut the education budget in Newtown and provide the children a quality education. I understand these are hard times, but a solid education is crucial and cutting the education budget will be detrimental to our school system.

I also ask that you consider including an advisory question on the referendum..."Should the budget be increased \$???" and "Shall the budget be decreased\$???" so if the budget is not passed, you know why and can proceed accordingly.

Thank you for your consideration!

Chris Haitz
19 Charter Ridge Dr
Sandy Hook

XX

March 25, 2010

Dear members of the Legislative Council and Board of Education,

As a teacher, tax payer, and parent in this town, I am extremely concerned about the ramifications the proposed budget will have on the standings of the Newtown Public School system and its students.

Foremost, as a teacher, I am fearful for the quality of our students' educational system. Please understand that my intent in writing this is certainly not to pin one building against the other; we need to be a unified community now more than ever. However, according to the Superintendent's presentation to the board, the majority of the proposed cuts will occur at the middle school. As a middle grade teacher, the middle school child and their needs is what I know, therefore, what I feel the most qualified about which to speak. However, I recognize that staff cuts at this magnitude at any building, would be equally disturbing. First, the removal of a seventh grade cluster, even though there is no decrease in enrollment, creates class sizes of 27-29 students packed into already cramped classrooms in an outdated building. I recently had administrators and the superintendent herself visit my classroom and observe me teach. Many of whom commented on the classroom conditions. I challenge them to imagine five additional desks, chairs, and bodies combined with glassware, solutions, scalpels and frog dissections occurring in that room, or any room at the middle school. A challenge it certainly would be. At the middle school level, we believe in the education of the whole child, which is one of the reasons for having homogeneous classes rather than leveled courses. We have a wide range of abilities and needs in the classroom. The larger the classes, the more difficult it becomes to meet the needs of each and every student. Finally, the cuts to the rotational classes, Home Economics and Computer Integration, are extremely alarming. During a time in this country when childhood obesity is on the rise, it has been determined that our students do not need a class that teaches not just "cooking" but nutritional awareness, how to make intelligent food choices to fuel our bodies, and how to be an educated consumer. This cut is disheartening, if not shocking. More disturbingly, do we really expect our students to be competitive in the global community

without computer integration skills? In an antiquated building where the classrooms lack even a single computer for student use, it is near impossible to imagine students being prepared for high school without this course. There are students here in Newtown that do not have access to computers at home, or to the Internet, nor know how to attach their work to an email, etc... In this age of technology, these computer skills are now life skills. The idea of cutting a class that teaches students how to assess the credibility of websites for their research papers, the dangers of internet social sites, the use of Excel to organize data, etc. seems preposterous. I am fearful students will not learn the vital technological skills required to be prepared for high school, if they are denied access to the computer integration course in a poorly equipped building that lacks accessibility to technology in the classroom.

In addition, as a community member and parent, I am concerned for the safety of our children and cringe at the thought of our streets, riddled with students each afternoon due to the cut of afterschool activities. The lack of opportunity for students to discover their talents on the basketball court, on a stage, or in the Student Council is deplorable. Education occurs in all arenas, not just the classroom, and I am sure some of our most memorable schooling experiences involve a team or club of some sort. The thought that our students will be deprived of these experiences is heartbreaking.

Finally, and most poignantly, as a tax-payer, I feel as though the assumption that residents are unwilling to fund an adequate budget to provide an exceptional education to our children is inaccurate. Being a single mother, teacher, and tax paying resident in this town, I certainly understand the financial strains our current economic crisis has created. However, the insignificant savings the current budget cuts would create for individual tax payers pales in comparison to the enormous and detrimental impacts these cuts will have on our students. In addition, the decrease in house values in our town would only be perpetuated by under-funded schools. I implore you to restore some, if not all of the \$2.5 million dollars the Board of Finance has cut from the budget. Should the referendum fail, then make cuts and entertain the idea of letting the experts, the building principals, find the cuts that would least impact the students. The finance advisory board should not be allowed to speak for the residents of this town. That is why we, as residents, vote. If we truly want Newtown's school system to go from good to great, we need to be, and many of us are, willing to pay the price. Otherwise our children's education is the price we will be paying.

Thank you for your time, and I appreciate your efforts in making this important decision.

Sincerely,

Valerie LeBlanc

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

WE NEED TO RETAIN THE ST ROSE NURSE, SUCH A SMALL EXPENSE ALLOWS FOR A LARGE AMOUNT OF "PIECE OF MIND".

THIS GOES FOR ALL OUR SCHOOLS BUT ONLY ST ROSE IS UNDER THE KNIFE, ONE CAN ONLY WONDER WHY !!!!!!!!!!!!!

MARK & SHARI PAVLICEK

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Legislative Council Members,

My husband and I moved to Newtown 13 years ago to purchase our first home and to start a family. We looked at several towns in the area, including Bethel, Brookfield and New Fairfield. What made us choose Newtown? The sense of community we felt during our house hunting and the quality public school system. Many of our friends and neighbors chose Newtown for similar reasons.

My sons have had fantastic teachers, many who go above and beyond to meet the needs of their students. The school environments have been very caring and nurturing and run by adept

administrations and staff. But I feel that the foundation of our quality public school system has begun to erode. And with each passing year the erosion threats are becoming bigger and bigger.

So, I'm requesting that you reinstate the \$2.5 million that has been cut from the education budget and let the people of Newtown decide. Additionally, I believe advisory questions ("Should the budget be increased?", "Should the budget be decreased?", and "Should the budget remain the same?") should be included on the referendum for both the town and school budget components. This way, if the budget is defeated, the advisory questions will provide the direction for the actions to be taken on revising the budget. We can not continue to cut the education budget in Newtown and continue to provide the children with a quality education. I understand these are tough economic times, but a quality education is very, very important to me, and I'm willing to pay for it.

I applaud you all for the time and effort you put into being on the Legislative Council. Many of the issues you face are not easy. But, in my opinion, our public school system is our town's "crown jewel" and should be, at the very least, protected as best as possible, and enhanced whenever possible.

Sincerely,

Sally Ingwersen

7 Somerset Lane

Sandy Hook

XX

I have five requests for the Legislative Council this evening.

1. I would like to ask the council to determine whether or not the town and the school side of the budget are truly sharing the sacrifices that need to be made during this dire economy.

The BOF cut the school budget 10X more than the municipal budget and I am not sure why.

It appears the BOF is asking the children and parents of Newtown to make more sacrifices than any other group in Newtown.

I am all for our roads being fixed, having adequate police protection, having contingency funds for emergencies and preserving jobs however I am going to share the following numbers to demonstrate the inequity in the BOF decision.

- The overall increase in the school budget is \$680,000.
- The police department alone is getting an increase of \$255,000 (more than 1/3rd of the entire school budget increase).
- The highway department alone is getting an increase of \$791,000 (with \$341,000 increase in the operating budget and an additional \$450,000 for bridgework that has been shifted from the operating budget to the capital budget). The highway budget increase alone is more than the entire school budget increase.
- There is also a contingency fund of \$400,000 (which is about 2/3rd of an increase of the entire school budget increase).

- There is only one staff reduction on the town side of the budget. The school district may be forced to lay off as many as 20.5 teachers plus other staff members.
- Teacher's salaries are essentially frozen with 1/3rd of them making less than what they made last year so why not everyone else?

Is the economy only dire for the schools?

It appears we are not losing any municipal services. In fact, we are paying more and I am not confident that the money we approve for the roads will be used to fix our roads. There is still no accounting of how much of the highway money was diverted to fund the FFH development.

On the flip side, the children have a lot to lose. If the BOE is forced to implement the \$2.5MM cut, there will be larger class sizes. There will be lost opportunities in art, music, family/consumer science, foreign language and other courses that enrich their learning.

Parents of Reed, Middle School and the High School may pay up to 10X more for their children to participate in extracurricular programs and sports. I call this redistribution of taxation. My tax increase will be 3% plus any additional fees I must pay for my children to participate in sports and other activities. How is that fair?

We do a nice job taking care of our neediest elderly in town by giving them \$1.2MM in tax relief. We must also take care of our children.

2. I would like to ask the council to create a contingency fund for the schools.

The BOF has ensured that the town side of the budget will have \$400,000 to have an adequate contingency fund for any unanticipated costs. The BOF did not create the same type of contingency fund for the schools despite high risk assumptions being used to justify half of their cuts. We need to be fair.

3. I would like to ask the council to have a full discussion on how and when the town's savings account is to be used.

The BOF made a decision to apply only \$1MM from our town's saving's account this year when \$2MM was applied last year. Surely we could apply at least \$500,000 more from our savings account given that our BOF chairman has never seen a budget year worst than this year in the past 17 years. We still have more than 6% of the operating budget in this account which is \$6.6MM.

4. I ask that the council add advisory questions to the ballot to determine the true desire of the voters.

I do not believe the BOF-recommended budget meets the needs of my children or my family or the vision that I have for Newtown. However, I am aware others may feel differently and I completely respect that. Why not find out by placing advisory questions on the ballot? Other towns allow these questions and our Charter clearly states that questions can be placed on the ballot. Please review the copy of the advisory questions on the Town of Lebanon ballot and vote to add similar questions to our ballot.

5. Finally, I urge the council to allow the voters of Newtown to decide on the BOE-recommended budget and not rubberstamp the BOF-recommended budget.

IF the BOF can politely honor the BOS budget request with minor adjustments offered up by the First Selectman, then the BOF could have honored the BOE budget request with the adjustments offered up by the BOE as well. Why didn't they?

Please allow the voters to decide on a budget the educational experts have recommended. Even though you don't have a line-item control over the school budget, by tightly controlling the purse string makes you, the Legislative Council and the Board of Finance the de facto educational policy makers.

You have to ask yourself if the LC and the BOF are the appropriate group in town to force decisions on class sizes and changes to the curriculum.

I am advocating for you to allow the voters to decide on the budget---just as I had advocated for a vote on the parking lot project on FFH and the HS expansion overages. If you add the \$2.5MM back, it means I pay \$1 a day more.

Our children deserve the same educational and extracurricular experiences enjoyed by any of you or your children and others in the community. If you or your children and others in the community did not pay to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities and had normal class sizes, then why should we pay more for our children to participate-- in addition to paying more taxes?

It is simply not fair to pass on a less desirable school system to our children. Our children deserve the same blue ribbon schools that some of you have benefited from already.

I urge you to carefully consider these requests.

Po Murray
XX
Hello,

My name is Jennifer Foss and my daughter attends St. Rose School. I am also a practicing RN and Nurse Manager at Danbury Hospital. When I was informed of the possibility that the school RN position at St. Rose was in jeopardy, I was honestly in shock.

The role of school nurse is no longer to wipe noses and send sick children home. These nurses are literally first responders to ailing children and key in disease and infectious disease prevention. Not having a school RN is a huge liability and parents will not feel safe sending their children to school. Asthmatics, diabetics, and other children struggling with chronic illnesses need access to quick and reliable in-school nursing care.

Our school RN, Bonnie Nezvesky is invaluable. For example, when there was an outbreak of lice in the Kindergarten classrooms she did head checks on the students and provided thorough education to parents on how to eradicate lice. I'm afraid to think about what could have happened if a trained professional wasn't on site.

For the safety of our children, please consider keeping this vital position.
Thank you for listening to my concerns.

Thanks again,
Jennifer Foss
XX

I would like to write a quick email showing my support for supporting the school budget. To keep this town competitive with the other schools we need to financially support our schools. We ask so much of the Teachers and Staff though do not give them the tools to be successful. We would be failing our children if we do pass the budget without further reducing the funds.

Louarna Kalten
XX
Kevin,

We can respectfully agree to disagree, but we do agree on the advisory questions. I would love to see them on the referendum, and I have been told in the past they were not possible. I don't recall why. I think it would solve a great deal of second guessing. Thank you for your response.

Barbara Bloom

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Thanks Kevin. It's amazing to me that as representatives, more of the Council is not in favor of reinstating some or all of the funds, as public opinion was so overwhelmingly unanimous. I was pleasantly surprised at the public hearing to see that virtually everyone in attendance felt the same way and even the one person who spoke from the other side of thinking was reluctant. I'll continue to attend the meetings and will write again.

Heather Smith

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Kevin, Thank you. I was at the meeting and impressed with the variety of speakers as well as with their message. Good luck with this decision. I think if I was on the council, I would give the people what they are asking for and let the votes speak. I also feel that it is imperative to start collecting some real data - both on the ballot and in surveys. This will raise the consciousness level of those who don't get out to vote.

Sincerely,
Claudia

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Kevin:

Thank you very much for a well articulated response. Just as a point of clarification the currently proposed option on the table is not for a 2.74% increase but rather 3%. See Bob Tait's "what if" sheet. The current BoF proposal results in a mill rate of 24.13.

However, that is somewhat beside the major thrust of the various arguments. I respect your opinion but I do not share it. We cannot afford to continue to increase our expenditures in such a way as to result in these tax increases which I believe will be rejected by the people.

I do agree with you completely that our referendum results do not give a clear picture of what the people are saying. I also believe that our two-headed budget needs to be split so that greater clarity can be secured from our votes.

Many thanks for your service.

Paul Mangiafico

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Members of the Legislative Council,

Please restore the budget to its original content.

I am a single mother of a young child who will be entering the Newtown Public School system in the next 3 years. It is a struggle to make ends meet each month as I make due on a meager salary and extra small jobs. Even though money is very tight for me, I am more than willing to pay an increase in taxes as long as I know that the money will be well spent towards the betterment of the school district. I am very troubled by the current condition of the budget, because I feel that this is the beginning of a steep deterioration of a quality school district and it is the children who will suffer in the long run.

Thank you for all the effort, attention to details, "outside-the-box" thinking and discussions you have put in as board members. I am certain that this is a very difficult time for all of you as well.

Sincerely,

Tracy Ryan

4 Johnson Drive
Sandy Hook, CT

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Kevin,

Thanks so much for your thoughtful and informative response. I have only heard back from one other council member.

I agree with much of what you outlined,...however, I am concerned about what I will term bias information that the BOE tends to develop/publish for you as well as the general public. I have received repeated "informative" reminders from the BOE through the PTA, and these are clearly an attempt to sway the parents judgement on the issues by focusing on firing teachers, and the consequent degradation of quality education,...while suggesting that more money can be taken from the town side of the budget (tell me where that would come from?). It is this type of activity that insults my intelligence! But the hype does send many of the parents to your meetings to support a budget increase.

That being said, I agree strongly with the need for advisory questions. These questions provide answers and direction on what the voters want.

I will tell you that if the budget is arbitrarily increased because of vague or "soft" BOE information or hype, and sent to referendum, I will vote against it.

Thank you again.

Richard

XX

Thanks for reading my e-mail.

Unfortunately I wasn't able to speak at last week's meeting. I have had the opportunity over the last few years to attend many Legislative Council, Board of Finance and Board of Education meetings and I truly appreciate all of the hard work that everyone puts into their responsibilities. What I also appreciate is how I feel that everyone is truly working to make Newtown a better place to live for everyone.

So while I feel that everyone is doing their best, I doesn't mean that every decision that is made by these boards is the best. What's nice is that our town government has very good checks and balances. That is where I feel that you and the rest of the legislative council can play a big part.

From my perspective I feel the proposed budget from the Board of Finance (BOF) cuts far too deep in the Board of Education budget. I attended the last few meetings of the BOF and witnessed their deliberation of the school budget. While I understand the need for fiscal scrutiny, the way that the board of finance decided on their number was by simply throwing a number out on the table. One of the members of the BOF even stated (paraphrasing) "Do you realize how many teachers this would cut" and the response from the one who proposed the amount simply stated (paraphrasing again)"That is not for us to decide but is up to the Board of Education". I really don't feel this is the way the decision on the financing for the school budget should have been made.

With all of that said, at least we definitively know how these proposed cuts will affect the school operations. All Reed after school activities and numerous teachers -- just to name a couple. To me this is completely unacceptable and hurts more than you can imagine. My daughter is at Reed now and the after school programs have made a huge impact on her self esteem and enjoyment of school. In terms of teachers, I think our society too often thinks of them as a commodity, but unfortunately that is not something that I feel we can scrimp and save. We all know what class size does to a student's experience...and we want to inflict this on our own children???

Please work to put back the Board of Education budget to what was originally proposed by the Board of Ed and let the people of Newtown decide on the budget.

Thank you.

Chris Smith

22 Wills Road

Newtown, CT.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
TO: LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS
FROM: BOB HALL
SUBJECT: BOARD OF ED ANNUAL APPROPRIATION
DATE: MARCH 27, 2010

I have to confess that I enjoyed entering all your e-mail addresses in my computer. What a difference from a few years ago when my communication was usually oral and directed at only one or two members.

From what I read and hear you are being inundated with e-mails requesting restoration of a larger increase in the Board of Ed budget than the increase recommended by the Board of Finance.

There is a strong contrary view, and I want you to uphold the recommendation of the Board of Finance.

There is no way out of the overall budgetary mess we are in except by cutting expenditures at all levels of government. This does not mean being "anti-education." It simply means being realistic. There is simply no more money.

The beauty (or curse, depending on your point of view) is that the Board charged with educating our children (or in my case our grandchildren) is able to spend the money as it sees fit, to get the most education for the money allotted. It is up to us to tell the Board how much they have to spend. From all reports the Board of Finance considered all points of view before striking a balance between what the Board of Ed wants and what the Town can afford to spend. You should not upset that balance unless the Council as a whole is going to duplicate the effort which the Board of Finance already expended, and even if you did I would expect a similar result.

Please do not be intimidated by volume of e-mail communication. If all it takes is volume and not quality of argument anyone with a computer and access to the internet could generate mass hysteria and control of your actions. I trust you are all strong enough to recognize mass e-mailings for what they are.

Sincerely,
Robert H. Hall
5 Nettleton Ave.
District 3

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Newtown Board of Education

Dear School Board Members,

Please reconsider your proposed plan to cut the Nurse Position at St. Rose School. The St Rose School Nurse serves a significant student body population of Newtown residents. The services provided by the St. Rose School Nurse are just as critical to the safety and medical needs of our student population as any other nurse in the Newtown Public schools. Are you considering cutting any other Nurse position(s) in the Newtown Public Schools?

I am a Newtown Resident with three children at St Rose School. **Two of my children have a Life Threatening Allergy to Peanuts & Tree Nuts.** Peanuts and Tree Nuts contain a highly potent protein that can cause a severe anaphylactic reaction in a matter of 2-3 minutes. This allergic reaction can be fatal in the same amount of time. Any small amount of Peanut or Tree Nut protein can trigger an allergic reaction. Providing children a safe and completely nut free environment is

almost impossible. ***A trained nurse on staff is critical in order to provide the necessary medical treatment required in the event of an allergic reaction.***

When it comes to the safety of our Newtown Children, I hope you will not carelessly cut the Nurse Position at St. Rose School.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Lucy Adamcheck
5 Boulder Creek Road
Newtown, CT 06470

XX

Hi Kevin,

I would like to ask that you please do not add back the full \$2.5MM to the BOE budget. I'm not very convinced it's necessary...

Of that \$2.5MM, somewhere between \$1.2-\$1.4MM reflects a reduced need reflecting estimated savings in electricity, diesel, heating oil, excess cost grant and medical insurance. Although a substantial portion of this is based only on estimates, I understand the thought process and agree it's a rational conclusion.

But the BOF, after having identified that amount of savings in their discussions with the BOE, went on to tack-on an additional \$1MM+ to their recommended cut, to an amount totaling \$2.5MM. Worth mentioning, I truly do have a lot of respect for the work the BOF is doing, and I'm happy to have their perspective in establishing an overall budget for the town. But in some ways, they have a different objective in their budget work than you should have, as the Legislative Council. They have a great 30,000 ft view of the budgets, as well as an ability to swoop in low to check out details within both the BOE and the Town side budgets, and that's how it should be. But at the end of the day, they are number-centric, and their overall concern is focused on the town's financial stability, our debt load, and our bond rating, which can be impacted by our ability to pass a budget on the first pass. And it's that latter point that I think helped motivate them to make further cuts to the BOE budget. Meaning, in order to arrive at a budget increase that is more likely to pass on the first vote, they settled on the seemingly-reasonable, round number of 3%, which is where we stand today.

But your job as the Legislative Council is to not have a 30,000 foot view, not to be as number-centric, but instead to hear and understand people's concerns and needs as tax payers and then take a stand based on the specific and tangible affects the proposed budget can likely have. The Superintendent and BOE have outlined a couple of scenarios that describe several actions that will very possibly be taken given the proposed cuts to the budget, and this is what I'm reacting to in my thoughts below.

There are 10-15 teacher positions listed as likely cuts. My view is that we should not be eliminating any teacher positions that aren't based on demographic trends or shrinking class enrollment. I would propose adding back \$540,000 to the BOE budget in order to avoid cutting 10 teachers. I know this has an impact on our taxes. Based on the assessed value of my own home --which I guess can serve as a decent example since its just slightly higher than the average value for the town-- the tax I'd pay based on the current 3% budget increase recommended by the BOF would be almost \$8,800. Now that doesn't make me happy, but education is one

thing that I am willing to pay for and I believe it has great value of all of us -- not just those households with kids in the public schools. If we add \$540K back to the budget, my own tax amount increases by about \$50. Another group of likely cuts listed are all of the after school activities for Reed, the Middle School, and some in the High School. Adding back funding for these programs, at a cost of about \$210,000, would increase my tax bill by another \$20. So adding back funding to cover both of these items, my own taxes would increase by around \$70. To be clear, it's the \$8,800 part of my tax bill that causes me angst -- not the \$70. Please keep that in mind -- it's a very marginal additional increase that can help avoid some significant and damaging cuts by the BOE.

It's often said that in these tough times, everyone needs to tighten their belts and sacrifice a bit. Well, I can assure you that lots of people with kids in the school system are also tightening their belts as much as anyone else, but these are EXACTLY the types of things that they are willing to sacrifice for. This IS what matters most. So my suggestion to you is do NOT consider adding back \$2.5MM to the school budget. But DO consider adding back \$750,000.

Lastly, before you take this up in your own deliberations, **I hope you can get a very definitive answer from the BOE whether the cuts they described are truly the cuts they will need to make.** Based on last year, this is a legitimate question to ask. And if not, what exactly is it that they need this money for? This is the time for full disclosure and explanation. But don't penalize the Newtown students based on your suspicions or frustration with a lack of transparency. I fully recognize that it is not in your purview to control specific line items or teacher positions that may or may not be impacted by the resulting budget. But that doesn't mean you can insulate yourselves from these results either. Assuming that these potential cuts are real, please work into your discussions and deliberations whether or not you, personally, are comfortable cutting these teachers and these programs and why you think it's ok. And if it's actually the case that you just honestly don't believe the BOE and Superintendent when they tell you these cuts are needed, I hope that you can make that very clear too. This is your responsibility and it's not easy, but I hope this prevents the possibility of you simply accepting the BOF's budget from a safe distance of 30,000 feet.

Thanks, I appreciate your hard work on the LC.

Regards,

Paul Lundquist

148 Currituck Rd

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Ben, Chris, Dan, Gary, George, Jan, Jeff, Jim, John, Kevin, MaryAnn and Richard; the Distinguished Members of Newtown's Legislative Council -

Every year at budget time, Newtown's Board of Finance performs the most objective, exhaustive and careful reviews of our town and B of E budgets, making recommendations and cuts where prudent. As a taxpayer and member of an often too silent majority, I thought you should all know how much I and those I call friends and neighbors appreciate the work and sacrifices made by these six professional finance volunteers on behalf of all us Newtowners. Unfortunately, in difficult times such as these, their jobs are exponentially more difficult.

As a Newtown taxpayer and voter, I urge you to abide by the recommendations of our Board of Finance and allow their revised budget to stand as posted today, March 25, 2010. Your support of this board's impartial work is vital and this budget must go to referendum as is.

Some will disagree with much of what I am about to say and, that's okay. In a community such as ours, respectful discord is common and healthy. Despite some of the following statements, you should know that no disrespect is intended or harbored toward any individual. These are simply the facts, as I see them. You should also know that I am a believer in the value of our children's education and defending every child's constitutional right to the best possible education.

However, the annual dance performed by Newtown's fringe-element of school-side extremists is wearing thin. Despite the rhetoric, the sky is not falling and smart taxpayers see through our school superintendent's smokescreen. We know that what are characterized as "cuts" in the educational budget are not cuts at all. They are nothing more than reductions to an inflated, porked-up request made by folks that think a "flat" budget means "go for 5%...an increase of \$3.4 million". (Source: Town of Newtown Expenditure Budget Summary)

Upholding the Board of Finance's proposed \$680,000 increase to the educational budget is the best way for you, the members of the Legislative Council, to support our B of F and stand with "We the People", the majority of Newtown voters and taxpayers in these tough economic times. It also will send a message that a vocal minority of fringe-element extremists cannot bully the rest of our town by spreading nastiness and misrepresentations of fact that work Newtown's PTA memberships into an annual frenzy, driven by half and whole untruths.

Unfortunately, what most of the frenzied followers of the school superintendent's team fail to recognize is their KoolAid is laced with distortions. Every year, the school budget is increased yet somehow, it is always painted as being cut, with fingers pointed at the Board of Finance and the Legislative Council. Hardly a "thank you for the additional \$680,000" in difficult times. One only need read The Newtown Bee to see the creativity in enrollment estimates, cost of commodities and staffing "needs" that do not align with enrollment trends. Space needs are exaggerated by seldom considering empty classrooms in some buildings or elimination of electives having a scant handful of students in others. It's our own "inconvenient truth": careful selection of fact and fiction is crafted to present the best spin in order to motivate chaos from as many concerned parents as possible. And the rest of us stand by quietly. Disgraceful!

To me, it is shocking that the highest paid taxpayer-compensated employee of Newtown can, with a straight face, present slanted emotional arguments based upon less than the complete truth when dealing with the very taxpayers who sign her paycheck. More shocking is to have this highly paid public employee exercise punitive budgeting to work-up and mobilize her lobby, year after year. Pay to play? Wow, that had a BIG budget impact! Cutting extracurriculars at Reed and NMS? Peanuts! But boy, does that ever get the phones ringing and the flyers mailing...

Our school administration needs to change the way it thinks and operates. Find efficiencies and a new normal - just like we, the taxpayers have. How about a little austerity in bad times and rewards in good times? That's how recovery starts. In our house, the bad news is: It's been three years since my last raise at work. But the good news is: I am thrilled to be employed and plan to ride out the storm! No, we are not keeping up with inflation so, if we cannot afford something, we do not buy it. If we cannot pay off a loan, we do not borrow. Yes, we sacrifice knowing there's more good news: the economy is cyclical. There are better times ahead.

Allow me to conclude with a subject that is hard for me to comprehend. I seem to remember our educators being asked to accept a pay freeze in 2009. Now, correct me if I am wrong but, for contractual reasons, that "could not" happen last year. Then, I suppose because we were rebuffed last year, we did not press the issue this year, despite uncertain state funding and being mired in an extraordinary, extended economic slump. However, I really can't understand how a school administration that considers its own "contractual obligations" a sacred cow, even in an "outside the box" year can believe it is okay to ask bus drivers for pay concessions. Did these drivers not provide concessions and sign a new contract in 2009? Perhaps the owner-operators would be better motivated to do their part if they felt the sacrifice were shared. Lead by example.

Time for a new normal..

The Board of Finance has it right and I am confident that you, members of the Legislative Council, with the help of our B of F will also get it right by looking at every line of the budget's open book and trying to do the right thing for all taxpayers of Newtown. It's a lean year but, there are better times ahead.

Thank you!

Mitch Bolinsky
3 Wiley Lane
Newtown

XX

Dear Legislative Council Members,

It is with great disappointment that I feel I must write to you today. We are once again facing serious cuts to our town's educational system. I understand the Board of Finance's reduction to the budget by \$2.5 M and the anticipated reimbursements of approximately \$1.3 M. All of that being said, it still does not account for \$1.2 M in cuts that would need to be made.

We have eliminated and reduced so much in these recent years, that there isn't much left to cut that does not have an immediate and detrimental affect to our students. The programs that were deemed "nice to have" have already been cut and since then, they have not been restored. Please keep in mind that the numbers on paper are reality in the classroom. I have seen it first hand, as my son's fourth grade class is much larger this year.

"The school system is the heart of a town" has been stated so many times that it feels redundant to say so now, but it's just simply true. Please do not allow our educational system to slide backwards once again this year. Please ask yourselves how we can be among the top wealthiest towns in Connecticut and yet among the lowest in per pupil spending. I don't think that it reflects the values of my peers, our children, and our community as a whole.

I appreciate the valuable role that you play in our community. I am grateful for the time and dedication that you contribute by serving on the Legislative Council. You have the power to restore the funds and let our community decide what we truly value. Please restore the cuts and let us vote.

Respectfully,

Sharon Saunders
2 Pumpkin Lane
XX

Dear BOE and Council Members,

I've been asked to email you regarding the education budget and I'll be direct:

- 1) Be fiscally responsible and work with the existing budget
- 2) So be it if some after school programs are eliminated
- 3) It is critical that the needs of our gifted and talented students are met through the GATES program, which should NOT be eliminated. These students MUST HAVE their "special needs" met 100%. No Child Left Behind - People forget that this includes our GATES children and not just those with learning disabilities.

Regards,

Jo-Ann Maude
XX

Dear Board Members,

I am a parent of 2 St. Rose students, and it has come to my attention that the Board of Education for Newtown is looking into removing our school nurse at St. Rose. I am very concerned that removing the nurse could have a negative impact on our school and our students.

My son was born with Congenital Heart Disease and my daughter has asthma. My son has had 3 major open heart surgeries and just this past fall had to have a new pacemaker. Unfortunately, after returning home he came down with a massive infection. We stayed in the hospital in isolation for 6 days and then he had to be on an I.V. which fed him his medication for the next 8 weeks. The nurse at St. Rose had to monitor him continuously throughout the entire time. He at many times finds it difficult to breathe and has on multiple occasions had to be put in a wheel chair to be brought to the nurse. My husband and I are already aware that next year there is a great possibility that my son will once again have to undergo open heart surgery. I'm sure most of you who are parents cannot comprehend the thought of sending your children to a school that cannot provide medical care should something arise. It's incredibly disheartening to think that any parent/board member knowing the importance of a nurse for our children could be cut out of the budget. The position

of a nurse is one of great importance and that cannot be replaced by a teacher or any administrator should something happen. I personally would not want to bear the repercussions should something go wrong with a child, especially knowing it could have been prevented had a nurse been present.

I ask that you please reconsider removing our school nurse. Thank you for your time.

*Kind Regards,
Michele L. Chipman*

XX

Kevin,

I DON'T GET IT - these are the words myself and others in town residents express every time we attempt to discuss how this town operates. As a newly elected official, I wanted to let you know how I feel about the town's past behavior.

As we go thru the 2010-2011 budget process, where the mill rate is expected to increase and our BOE is expected to make cuts, I look around town to try and understand why we're in this situation. What I see is a town that lacks true leadership and vision.

I see projects getting completed that were completely unnecessary and provide no value/benefit for our community (walking path at Dickenson, block wall around Treadwell, middle school softball outfield - to name a few). These projects have the appearance of "doing something to keep town employees busy". I suggest that instead of wasted spending, we look to reduce the departments that are doing the unnecessary spending. At the same time, I see things that are important to our community getting cut out of the spending, particularly on the BOE side. The value of our town rests in the value of it's education system. The thought of losing a teacher or afterschool activity because we decided to redo the middle school softball field is ridiculous.

It is time that you and your constituents take a step back and look at the town as a whole, not two separate parts (town and BOE). I understand town infrastructure requires the two to remain independent, but that doesn't mean one should be pitted against the other. Someone needs to step up, act like a CEO and treat this like a business that has overall accountability to the results of a consolidated business with two operating units. Much like a stockholder who demands the best from his Board of Directors, as a taxpayer, I demand the best from my town council. It's time to look at the way the town spends money from the top down, not from the bottom up. Leadership needs to stop treating town expenditures as coming from two buckets (town & BOE) but instead one big bucket filled with our tax dollars. It is also time for leadership to take steps necessary to bring investment (and tax revenue) to our town. We can no longer afford to have a place like Fairfield Hills sit idle. At this point, action must be taken on FFH - we can no longer afford to have a visionless FFA in charge of this town's one investment.

Thank you for your time and efforts.

Sincerely,

Jeff Tousignant
28 Horseshoe Ridge Road
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XX

Dear Legislative Council Members,

At tonight's meeting, please reinstate the BOF's proposed 2.5MM cut to the education budget. Please, consider the Newtown children a priority in this town.

Thank you for your hard work,

Betsy Hoyt

3 Founders Lane

XX

Board of Education and Legislative Council Members,

I am writing to you today because I am extremely concerned over the potential cut of the nursing position at St. Rose. As the parent of two daughters with asthma, I am very worried about the safety of them. My sister in law teaches in an elementary school in Bridgeport that does not have a nurse. The principal has been forced into the role of "Nurse" and is in charge of dispensing medicine to the children. It is chaotic and risky. The potential for lawsuits seems to outweigh any potential savings from eliminating this position.

Further, I am concerned that this cut will only be made at St. Rose. I am a taxpayer too and am disturbed that a cut would be made at one school but not the others. Why would anyone think that the students at St. Rose do not need nursing care also? In addition to life threatening allergies and conditions, such as asthma, we recently had strep throat going through our school. Our school nurse was able to quickly identify the students who were having symptoms (my own included) and advise us to get our children to the doctors. Without a nurse to monitor the situation, I am sure it would have been even worse.

I am respectfully asking you to reconsider the funding for this position.

Regards,
Karen Palmieri

XX 148

Dear Members of the Board,

As a Mom, taxpayer and a huge advocate for children, I was saddened to find out that last night the sub-committee voted 3-1 in favor of recommending the LC uphold the \$2.5M reduction recommended by the BOF. While I was walking out of the LC meeting last week there was a group of people walking behind me who were saying that it was obvious from your body language and look that regardless of all the pleading that went on you weren't listening. They continued by saying "why have public participation if they don't care what we say and are going to do whatever they want." I foolishly turned around and defended the board by asking them not to make assumptions about you - that you would do your homework and do what was right. In hearing about the meeting, I find myself wondering if perhaps they were correct. Were you listening?

I have 2 sons in the school system - a freshman and a 7th grader. My freshman plays sports for the High School, is in honors classes and thankfully is on the honor roll. My 7th grader, who has an IEP, is also on the honor roll with all A's - not an easy accomplishment for him. My husband and I both spend numerous hours each night - even weekends (not 1 or 2 - numerous) with our youngest to continuously re-enforce what he was taught that day. Leading up to CMT's, the expectation was that we help him (this was the expectation of all students) with Math homework packets and teach him concepts that they had not had a chance to cover in school but would be on the CMT's. This should not be our responsibility - it is the schools but, we did because we knew it was the only way that he would learn the material.

Anyone who thinks that the quality of the education in Newtown has not diminished is fooling themselves! It has and it continues to do so. I spend many hours in the schools, speaking to teachers, speaking to parents about the best way to advocate for their students - so, I know firsthand that our education system is failing. How is it that cutting teachers is O.K.? Has the BOE done all they can - I don't know perhaps they can do more. But, has the BOE and LC done all they can? I don't think so. If the BOE has not done what they need to do are the boards "slapping their hands" and trying to give them a "wake-up" call? At whose expense - at

the expense of the students? Shame on everyone! When will the boards realize that what they are doing is not working - it doesn't seem you are working for the people but against the people. The people have let you know what they want - teachers and programs re-instated - so how does that happen if you keep the \$2.5M cut? Why have public participation? And finally but most importantly, at what point do all 3 boards bite the bullet and say - this is not working and if we are truly trying to come up with solutions that are in the best interest of our students then we need to all sit together and figure this out. What a concept - to work together as one.

Members of the Board, I implore you - please re-consider and let these kids have what they deserve - a good education - not a mediocre one. Get together with the boards and work this out. I can assure you - people are not going to support this budget as it is. There has to be some give and take - and we don't see it.

Sincerely,

Maggie Conway, Newtown resident

XX

To the Members of the Legislative Council:

I am writing this email to ask that you reinstate the \$2.5 million or at least a portion of that money to the BOE budget. I find it appalling that Newtown has such little regard for the education of their children! For years Newtown has been at the bottom of most other towns in this state in per pupil expenditure. However, test scores have been above state averages in all areas. Janet Robinson has stated that our goal is to be one of the top three towns in our DRG in test scores. How is that to happen if programs and teachers are cut? There will be larger class sizes! How will all students' needs be met to reach that goal? I realize that you must be sensitive to all the taxpayers needs. However, consider property values! Education is the first item that home buyers look at. Newtown will not be held in the high regard that it has in the past! I do not want to lose any more property value than I have already! Once again, please restore the money necessary to make it 'Nicer in Newtown'!

Lillian Martenson
14 Clearview Drive
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XX

Dear Legislative Council members,

I am very disappointed that the LC Education Subcommittee voted to support the Board of Finance's recommendation of cutting \$2.5MM from the education budget. I am writing to ask the LC Ordinance Subcommittee to examine if an ordinance could be written to allow advisory questions to be added to the ballot. Rather than guessing what you believe the voters will approve or not approve, it is time to poll the voters. Quantitative measures should be used to guide your decisions on the Legislative Council. Many town leaders have used the argument that there is a silent majority waiting to defeat the budget because it is too high. There is no proof of that. The budget passed by a significant margin (over 1000 votes) in the last two years.

It is very frustrating that the not-so-silent members of the community are completely dismissed in your budget decisions. The three LC Education Subcommittee members who did not hear one word from the education supporters have once again validated that it is a waste of time to communicate with you. You should not be afraid of allowing the voters to decide on the budget that has been recommended by the BOS and the BOE.

Please let me know if your ordinance group is willing to investigate the advisory questions. Please don't hide behind one legal opinion. The question you should be asking is "how can we add advisory questions?" and then make it happen.

Thank you.

Po Murray

38 Charter Ridge

XX

Thank you for your thoughtful and timely response. Having previously served on town boards in other communities I truly appreciate the effort elected officials dedicate to their work. To that end I believe in the people I voted for and am not in favor of an advisory question on the ballot.

I believe in our local elected officials and their dedication. The town I grew up in had a Representative Town Meeting to address the town budget. When I was first married, that town had a Town Council. Two completely different forms of government and both worked without the budget referendums and guidance questions.

Unfortunately voter turnout seems to be low for any number of reasons. I see the advisory questions as an opportunity for a vocal minority to claim a voice for the whole town which they may not have. If voter turnout was greater this would not concern me as much. I understand the concept that people should come out and have their voices heard and I wish more would. Consequently I would turn to our elected officials to work out a budget for the town that decreases spending including education.

No matter the question on the ballot, I will vote because I believe voting is something all residence should do. Thank you again for taking the time to respond.

Tom Long

XX

I am sending this to urge you to support the budget that was presented by the Board of Finance. Those people at your last meeting, most likely IPNers are crying crocodile tears. The poor little children are not going to suffer if the \$2,000,000. + is not added back in. I understand many of the e-mails you received were copies of a template sent by the IPNers, well, these are my own words.

Barbara O'Connor

XX152

Dear Council Members,
The Town of Mansfield and the Town of Lebanon in CT are towns without a bifurcated budget and they were able to put advisory questions on their ballot. I see no reason why Newtown would be prohibited from doing the same.
Po

<<http://www.lebanontownhall.org/event.htm?id=sio64nyz&m=05&y=2008&p=0>>
<http://www.lebanontownhall.org/event.htm?id=sio64nyz&m=05&y=2008&p=0>

Budget Referendum

Date: Mon, May 19, 2008
Time: 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM
Location: Fire Safety Complex

I am writing to the four of you as a 16-year resident of Newtown, living with my wife at 12 Old Castle Drive in District 1. As you are our representatives on the Legislative Council, I want you to know that my wife and I strongly support the actions of the Board of Finance and your own Council's subcommittee on finance to trim the budget proposal for FY10-11. If one applies the currently projected tax increase in the budget you will discuss next week (which takes into account the BOF's reductions), our property tax has **doubled** since we moved to Newtown. I am retired, and my wife is about to retire, and the check we write to Newtown (and its Borough!) is the single biggest expense that we face each year. If this property tax trend continues unabated, we will eventually not be able to remain in our home, and Newtown will lose yet another family that pays more in than it takes out of the Town's services.

As Newtown is currently pouring \$38M into an expansion of the high school (while simultaneously considering "mothballing" an elementary school in the face of declining enrollments) and as 50 cents of every property tax dollar goes to salary & benefits for someone on the Board of Ed side of the budget, it is supremely disingenuous of the pro-school-at-any-cost lobby to cry poor and demand reinstatement of the BOF's prudent \$2.5M cut. Caught between the outcome of years of generous contracts and a union that refuses to budge, Newtown faces the same day of reckoning as many other Connecticut towns, and kicking this dilemma "down the road" will do nothing to solve it.

My wife and I want to thank the BOF, your Council's subcommittee on finance, and the First Selectman for their good stewardship and strong leadership with this difficult issue. We urge you join with them and keep in mind our point of view amid what I am sure will be the clamor of next Wednesday's meeting. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
George & Anne Schmidt
203/270-1517

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Good Morning- I just want to let you know that there are many people, including my self, who would like the opportunity to vote on a budget that will deliver the same services that we have now in our schools. This will take more money, as the costs associated with schools go up each year; especially in the categories of insurance, healthcare and energy. However, it is worth the small amount to have an appropriate education for our children and to have a desirable community. Plus, it is only democratic if taxpayers get to vote on what they have currently.

You hear from taxpayers on both sides, however the taxpayers and boards also have an obligation to those citizens who do not vote, our community's children. I know that our community wants them to receive a well-rounded and meaningful education, so that they can be competitive in the world and be fulfilled individuals.

Also, when taxpayers tell you they do not want an increase, please ask more and see why.. Have they lost a job and are in financial trouble? Then let's defer their taxes until they have a job and the ability to pay. I am ok with funding this.

Are they on a fixed income? Then help them out with taxes so that this issue does not need to drag down our schools.

Or do they just not know about the school funding situation, assuming this money will be found.. or not care much about the kind of education offered because they do not have children in the public schools? Then we need to look at these comments with a scrutinizing eye, as they are not in the best interest of our community and our students.

I strongly believe that our community puts a high priority on education, and will pay for it. Please allow the taxpayers to decide, add back at least the \$1,200,000 so that the schools can maintain status quo services/programs/staffing, and so that we have a democratic process.

Regards,
Michele Hankin

XX

Dear Council Members,

Please consider re-instating the \$2.5 million (or a compromise of at least \$1.5M) back into the Board of Education Budget.

Thank you for your service,

Christopher Fallon
6 Hall Lane
Newtown, CT 06470

XX

Dear Legislative Council Members, today I asked my daughter if it was okay to tell you her story. She said yes.

My daughter, Claire, is in Eighth Grade at Newtown Middle School. Her school year started out beautifully when she found out that she was assigned the cluster that she had been wishing for. She was very happy and did well, making Honor Roll. Claire loves theatre and tried out for the Middle School musical, The Music Man. She got the part of Maud Dunlop and enthusiastically threw herself into the roll, guided by her Language Arts teacher, Miss Sinal, the director of the play. The play and the cluster teachers from 8 Blue turned out to be even more of a blessing than we expected.

In the late Fall, Claire's doctor told us that she needs to wear a Boston Brace for scoliosis. Her back has two significant curves, and if we're lucky, this brace will prevent the need for major surgery. The brace is made of hard plastic and has three Velcro fasteners in the back. Claire must wear it at least 22 hours a day. She has been to many doctor appointments and fittings for the brace, and just when we thought she had the hang of it, x-rays showed that the brace isn't working properly and she has to wear it tighter and possibly even have it replaced. She has had a difficult time sleeping. The brace is tight and uncomfortable, making it hard to do some everyday activities. The entire process has been difficult and painful, and that is just the physical part of it.

Can you imagine being a 13-year-old girl and being told by a male doctor, that you have to wear an ugly, annoying brace all of the time for two to three years, so that you have a pretty good chance of not needing surgery? Sometimes parenting is really heart wrenching. It was a tough sell—a difficult decision, but we are now all convinced that the brace is really the best option, however traumatic.

The reason I'm telling you this story is because I want you to know that Claire was able to bear the difficult times and even put on a happy face because she had something to look forward to: the school play. She also had her steadfast friends and the very strong support of the cluster teachers from 8 Blue, who were very sensitive to Claire's needs and took the time to be sure that her adjustment in school went well.

I think most parents are upset by the idea of losing whole departments in the Middle School, like Family Consumer Science and French. Those are valuable and should be retained. But I'm writing to tell you that if a cluster of teachers is removed, and the student/teacher ratio goes up, then teachers won't have time to make sure

that students like Claire are doing okay. If after-school activities are discontinued, then kids like Claire will not have that to look forward to.

Our children are real people with real needs. They are individuals and must be treated as such. We must respect students and teachers alike by providing them with a learning and working environment where they can be productive and reach reasonable goals and beyond. If we want to *Inspire Each Student [and teacher] to Excel*, then we have to put our money where our mouth is! In spite of the brace, Claire got lucky this year. The school show gave her a positive focus. She has great teachers who are able to go above and beyond. The French trip to Quebec is coming up. These are all very positive learning experiences made possible by the school that will make my daughter remember much more than, "that was the awful year I had to get that brace."

Thank you very much for your time and dedication to our town. I believe when making very difficult decisions, it is best to think long-term. That is why my daughter is wearing her brace right now. If we did what was cheapest, then we would have bigger and more traumatic difficulties in the future. Our schools need support also, so that all of the children can grow properly. Please put the money back into the budget so that the town can vote on it. It may be a tough sell, but it's the best option.

Sincerely, Elizabeth Alexander

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

To: Members of the Legislative Council

From: Christina Welsh, NMS Computer Integration Teacher

I am emailing you to reiterate my deep concerns about eliminating the Computer Integration program at the middle school and how our middle school students will be prepared with 21st century computer skills.

Computer Integration at the middle school is one of the 5 rotation classes, as is the Family and Consumer Science program which is also proposed to be cut. That would leave only 3 programs in the rotation...Health, Project Adventure and Technology Education.

Pew Research Center reports that 93% of teens between the ages of 12-17 go online. Teens in grades 7-12 spend more hours online each week than watching TV. Research also shows their computer usage is predominately spent on recreational activities, i.e. social networking, gaming, instant messaging, etc.

Although the middle school age group spends a considerable amount of time using digital technology, many lack research skills and have a limited understanding of how to effectively apply the technology in the educational setting. They are also unaware of the many Web 2.0 tools that could be very useful in their educational lives. Tools such as google.com/squared, google docs for doing group projects, PhotoStory3, wordle.net, and many more.

The purpose of Computer Integration is to teach students computer skills for educational and research purposes. Skills they will integrate in class work and homework in other disciplines. This program reaches every student in grades 7 and 8.

The content of my course needs to flow with the ever changing nature of computer technology. For instance when the current 8th graders leave the middle school each will have among other things:

- Created and presented an engaging oral presentation using PowerPoint's advanced features and Microsoft Excel
- been taught how to efficiently research using the internet
- used PowerPoint as a tool to storyboard a digital story

- used PhotoStory3 to produce a digital story narrated in their own voice
- burned a CD
- published a booklet,
- incorporated a variety of Web 2.0 tools into their schoolwork.

With the upgrade to Windows XP just this year many more Web 2.0 tools and programs are available for students to learn about and use in school. Next rotation I am piloting changes that incorporate more Web 2.0 tools for next year.

Newtown schools can not afford to allow students to regress with technology. We are already behind many schools that have embraced Web 2.0 by assigning student email accounts, that are blogging, social networking, sharing Google docs, using twitter, etc.

I have 2 children in college so I know the level of computer skills that is expected

By eliminating this program at the middle school, teaching computer application skills will be added to each classroom teachers work load. It is unrealistic to expect classroom teachers to keep abreast of new computer tools that are constantly appearing and evolving and to use time in the classroom to teach these new programs and tools.

I know the course I teach makes a difference. Parents that I see in town tell me their children are using the skills at home and in their high school courses and teaching them to family members. I hear from teachers in my building about students becoming computer skill ambassadors in the classroom by sharing their new knowledge with their peers and teachers.

As each student leaves my rotation class I encourage them to hold on to the booklet they compile of their work and the handouts they were given for future reference because I have high school students return to describe and in some cases show me how they have implemented the computer skills learned in my class in their high school work.

That is what the middle school Computer Integration course is about and how it benefits our children.

With the elimination of this program every student will miss exposure to a class that focuses exclusively on how the computer and internet can be used as a tool for educational and research purposes. This two-year void will occur just prior to students entering high school where there is not a comparable course offered to every student. This 2 year void will occur when the teens need to draw on computer technology skills that have not been forgotten, have not grown stagnant, and are not outdated.

The new Computer Technology Curriculum for the district is ready for Board of Education approval. We need to support this new curriculum in its entirety, kindergarten through grade 12. The preparation provided at grades 5-6 is meant to be a foundation for the middle school computer program. It is just not enough to prepare for high school research and computer technology application.

Our district needs to support the plan that was developed to empower our students with 21st century computer skills.

My hope is that Computer Integration program for grades 7 and 8 will be restored.

*** This Email was sent by a staff member at District Office.

XX

Dear members of the Legislative Council,

April 6, 2010

An education is the first thing that people look at when they determine whether to move to a town or city, or not. They are looking ahead, into the future. Sometime in the late 80's or early 90's, this town decided to grow. Decided to clear the woods and farms and build large, beautiful neighborhoods, like ones in Charter Ridge, Marlin Road, Equestrian Ridge, or Winton Farm Road. Naturally, those large homes and large pieces of property were built to attract a younger demographic to Newtown, a demographic which of course, would bring children as well. Those neighborhoods and so many like them certainly were not built with retired folks in mind. So now we have a lot of kids here who deserve and need a good quality education and a lot of parents who chose to live in Newtown based on the school district's quality and reputation.

Going forward, we need to generate more revenue from our housing market and commercial rental properties. We need to work together to support growth and development—having an eye on the future and not keeping a foot stuck in the past. I believe the best way to start this process is by establishing and keeping not just a quality school district, but a shining star that will help attract revenue to our town. Newtown truly does not have much else to offer perspective tax payers. Without the revenue, there's little choice than to keep chipping away at the education budget and in the end, creating an unrepairable school district.

After hearing that the LC subcommittee on education voted in favor of upholding the recommended \$2.5 million cut I felt nothing but outrage. I feel like the school district has become a political pawn—I simply cannot understand the fact that public hearing after public hearing those who have the courage to come out of their homes and voice their concerns and demands continue to be seemingly ignored.

Not long ago there was a tremendous undertaking here in Newtown to take a hard look at our school system (I believe it was called the Strategic Planning Committee). Together and in subcommittees they spent countless hours putting together a strategic plan to move our school district forward and responsibly into the 21st century. The outcome was an awesome, thrilling strategic plan...and now it seems like a complete waste of everyone's precious time. How can any of that strategic plan move forward when there's not enough money in the education budget right now to just keep the schools at status quo? What a shame.

I implore you all to consider restoring money to the education budget. Somewhere between \$1.2 million and \$750,000 seems more than reasonable to me. A reduction of \$2.5 million? Absolutely outrageous.

FYI, a portion of this letter was presented to you at the public hearing on March 25th. I also wanted to remind you that the Middle Gate Elementary school PTA has voted to support and advocate for the BOE budget as originally presented.

Thank you for your time.

Yours truly,

Lisa Wallace
43 Mile Hill South, Newtown
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Legislative Council Members,

This week's survey on the Newtown Bee website has not worked out well for determining the opinion of the voters. The idea of the survey was certainly to get a feel for how people in the town felt about the current state of the budget amount and the budget process. Unfortunately the format of the survey was not sufficiently rigorous to manage the strong opinions of those on all sides of the issues. The Editor's Note on the survey indicates that the statistics coming from the survey are not accurate and have been left on the website to allow people to read the related comments. The survey has only reflected deep passion on the subject, not what the voters actually want.

At each of the board and council meetings I have been to, many people have shown up to voice an opinion. The elected members at the meetings have praised those that have spoken and indicated that they also have contact with "many" who share and/or disagree with each opinion. Pat Llodra has been quoted in the Newtown Bee saying that there is an "unvoiced population in town" who she has heard from that, presumably, have not been voicing their opinions at the meetings so far. These comments make it easy to feel that there are a large number of voters whose opinion needs to be determined.

Fortunately, there is already a process in town for determining what the voters want. That process is the budget vote. Only those who are eligible can vote and each vote only counts once. The budget vote is where the acceptance of the budget should be tested.

The downside of this process this year is that the voters are not being allowed to start at one end of a budget in order to determine their opinion. The cuts that have been made at the Board of Finance have essentially "cut out" the voters. History has shown that if the budget if it fails to pass, cuts will be made—no increase will be attempted—so anything removed before the budget vote is out of the hands of the voters. This is not the way to get the opinion of all the voters that the elected representatives indicate that they are hearing from.

I urge the Legislative council to return \$1.3million to the Board of Education budget to allow the voters to work from the top down.

--Keith Alexander

8 Fawnwood Road, Sandy Hook

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Legislative Council Members

I plead with you again to re-instate a minimum of 1.2 Million to the education budget and let the taxpayers vote (previous letter below). I understand that those of you on the education subcommittee may be recommending no change to the bottom line. Considering the large outcry in support of education, might you consider shifting some of the budget reduction to the town side budget to share the burden across the town and over all taxpayers instead of saddling our children with

it. Also, I think it is time for our town to work together and I think that advisory questions on the ballot will help us determine the true needs of our townspeople. Regardless of your budget decision, please do your due diligence in finding the proper way to add them to our voting ballot.

Thank you,

Judy and Chuck Dubois

7 Marlin Rd

Sandy Hook, CT

XX

I attended the LC meeting on 3/25 where there was an overwhelming majority (99%) of people asking to have the 2.5 million in funds restored to the budget. The arguments were quite impressive. The question is, was anyone listening? I also reviewed the results from the informal poll that the Newtown Bee conducted. Again, it is very clear that the majority of people in this town would like to see the funds restored (if not increased) to the budget. Knowing that this is what the majority of people want, I do not see how you can put forward a budget that does not include the 2.5 million. We, the people, have a right to vote on whether or not we want to spend the additional 2.5 million on education. It is not a decision that should be made by 12 people, some of whom appear to be serving their own best interests, rather than being concerned with the best interests of this town.

Fran Maturo
5 Ironwood Drive
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

XX

As a District 1 constituent and budget follower, I urge and encourage you to insist on a more balanced and fiscally responsible approach to budget development from year to year.

My comments/observations are as follows:

In this economic environment, a 3% tax increase is unacceptable.

Many Newtown elected officials ran on a platform that included fiscal responsibility. For two years now, during budget season, fiscal responsible direction has been given to those who shape the budget. In both years, this direction has been essentially followed by one executive and ignored by the other executive.

The scenario goes like this. Last year, a 95% year-over-year guideline was presented. One executive heeded the guideline and the other executive allowed the "bidding" to start at 108%, putting town boards/councils in a defensive position; when they seek to limit budget increases that should not have been brought forward. Again this year, a zero budget year-over-year guideline was put forth and one executive essentially heeded the guidance and the other executive once again allowed the "bidding" to begin at 108%. This behavior of less than fiscal prudence potentially costs the taxpayers unwarranted tax increases. It also tends to encourage divisiveness among Newtown 's taxpayers.

I will not support a 3% tax increase. Many Newtown taxpayers that speak to me around town will not support a 3% tax increase. When you realize that those on Social Security did not get a cost of living adjustment in 2010, that numerous Newtowners have lost their jobs, that many Newtowners have lost their homes to foreclosure, it is apparent that it's time to hold the line on taxes.

I have attached updated charts regarding NHS student population analysis, Newtown housing - single family home permits and Newtown student pipeline data.

1. Notice that the actual NHS student population is trailing the projected population (used to justify the NHS expansion) by more than 150 students this school year. It's my understanding that HS teachers have been hired over time to support the HS expansion. With the actual HS student population significantly trailing the projected HS population, one could logically conclude that there is a surplus of teachers at the HS.
2. Notice that single family home permits (student population drivers) have trended down significantly since 2003. In fact for the first time since 2003, there have been zero (0) single family home permits for five (5) consecutive months. Not at all a growth scenario.
3. Notice that the Newtown pipeline data shows that NHS tops out at 1792 students in SY 12-13 and then drops precipitously. Once again, not a growth scenario.

In the aggregate, this data does not support the budget to increase year-over-year.

Regards,

Bob

XX

Dear Legislative Council members,

You are probably receiving numerous e-mails about the budget. I would like to add one thought you may not have heard yet. The voters of Newtown elected you to the Legislative Council. Do you not trust those same voters to make a decision on the budget? Please give us the opportunity to vote on a Board of Education budget that has been put together by our education professionals, not one that has been cut by the Board of Finance. Please stop this annual process of wringing water from a stone.

Thank you,
Lisa Romano

XX

Sent: 3/28/2010 7:26:58 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time
Subj: not a template

I am sending this to urge you to support the budget that was presented by the Board of Finance. Those people at your last meeting, most likely IPNers are crying crocodile tears. The poor little children are not going to suffer if the \$2,000,000. + is not added back in. I understand many of the e-mails you received were copies of a template sent by the IPNers, well, these are my own words.

Barbara O'Connor

XX

My husband and I are in complete agreement with the attached petition.

Anna and Dan Wiedemann, 13 Clearview Drive, Sandy Hook, CT

We, the undersigned taxpayers and registered voters of the Town of Newtown, Connecticut do hereby urge the members of Newtown's Legislative Council to abide by the recommendations of our Board of Finance and forward their proposed "Working Budget" for fiscal 2010-2011, published on March 14, 2010, to proceed to voter referendum without further revision.

We believe that the Board of Finance has conducted an impartial, exhaustive and objective review of the economic state of our town in light of current revenues and expenditure needs, as is their charge by charter. Therefore, the ultimate measure of appropriateness of their proposed \$104,453,615 budget should be left to Newtown's voters.

Sincerely,

The undersigned:

Anna

Wiedemann	13 Clearview Drive SH	Anna Wiedemann	
<i>Name (Print)</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

Dan

Wiedemann	13 Clearview Drive, SH	Dan Wiedemann	
<i>Name (Print)</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

XX

To the Members of the Legislative Council:

I am writing this email to ask that you reinstate the \$2.5 million or at least a portion of that money to the BOE budget. I find it appalling that Newtown has such little regard for the education of their children! For years Newtown has been at the bottom of most other towns in this state in per pupil expenditure. However, test scores have been above state averages in all areas. Janet Robinson has stated that our goal is to be one of the top three towns in our DRG in test scores. How is that to happen if programs and teachers are cut? There will be larger class sizes! How will all students' needs be met to reach that goal? I realize that you must be sensitive to all the taxpayers needs. However, consider property values! Education is the first item that home buyers look at. Newtown will not be held in the high regard that it has in the past! I do not want to lose any more property value than I have already! Once again, please restore the money necessary to make it 'Nicer in Newtown'!

Lillian Martenson
 14 Clearview Drive
 Sandy Hook, CT 06482

*** This Email was sent by a staff member at District Office.

XX

Dear Members of the Board,

As a Mom, taxpayer and a huge advocate for children, I was saddened to find out that last night the sub-committee voted 3-1 in favor of recommending the LC uphold the \$2.5M reduction recommended by the BOF. While I was walking out of the LC meeting last week there was a group of people walking behind me who were saying that it was obvious from your body language and look that regardless of all the pleading that went on you weren't listening. They continued by saying "why have public participation if they don't care what we say and are going to do whatever they want." I foolishly turned around and defended the board by asking them not to make assumptions about you - that you would do your homework and do what was right. In hearing about the meeting, I find myself wondering if perhaps they were correct. Were you listening?

I have 2 sons in the school system - a freshman and a 7th grader. My freshman plays sports for the High School, is in honors classes and thankfully is on the honor roll. My 7th grader, who has an IEP, is also on the honor roll with all A's - not an easy accomplishment for him. My husband and I both spend numerous hours each night - even weekends (not 1 or 2 - numerous) with our youngest to continuously re-enforce what he was taught that day. Leading up to CMT's, the expectation was that we help him (this was the expectation of all students) with Math homework packets and teach him concepts that they had not had a chance to cover in school but would be on the CMT's. This should not be our responsibility - it is the schools but, we did because we knew it was the only way that he would learn the material.

Anyone who thinks that the quality of the education in Newtown has not diminished is fooling themselves! It has and it continues to do so. I spend many hours in the schools, speaking to teachers, speaking to parents about the best way to advocate for their students - so, I know firsthand that our education system is failing. How is it that cutting teachers is O.K.? Has the BOE done all they can - I don't know perhaps they can

do more. But, has the BOF and LC done all they can? I don't think so. If the BOE has not done what they need to do are the boards "slapping their hands" and trying to give them a "wake-up" call? At whose expense - at the expense of the students? Shame on everyone! When will the boards realize that what they are doing is not working - it doesn't seem you are working for the people but against the people. The people have let you know what they want - teachers and programs re-instated - so how does that happen if you keep the \$2.5M cut? Why have public participation? And finally but most importantly, at what point do all 3 boards bite the bullet and say - this is not working and if we are truly trying to come up with solutions that are in the best interest of our students then we need to all sit together and figure this out. What a concept - to work together as one.

Members of the Board, I implore you - please re-consider and let these kids have what they deserve - a good education - not a mediocre one. Get together with the boards and work this out. I can assure you - people are not going to support this budget as it is. There has to be some give and take - and we don't see it.

Sincerely,

Maggie Conway, Newtown resident

XX

Dear Mr. Fitzgerald and Legislative Council Members,

My name is Nicole Morris, I live at 15 Glover Avenue in Newtown. I have taught Spanish in our schools for 31 years. My husband and I moved to Newtown in 1968 with our two children. Our town was very different then. You would be shocked if you knew what our mortgage/tax bill was!!!!!!EVERYTHING is very costly today that is why the tax moneyes that we pay must be spent carefully, I am not sure that is the case!!!!

I attended the LC meeting last Thursday at the High School and the same theme came up over and over. PLEASE DO NOT CUT EDUCATION. We cannot afford it. Teaching the Middle School children in crammed classes of 30 is deplorable!!!!My department was reduced by one member. This means that 130 students will be dispersed among three teachers and our classes will be enormous. This is not good education.

Please consider the decisions that you make today as they will have grave implications on this generation of students.

Sincerely yours,

Nicole Morris

ve implicaions

XX

Dear Members of the Board,

The Newtown Middle School PTA asks that you restore \$1.2 million dollars or the amount necessary (to the BOE budget) that will allow the Newtown Middle School to keep their teachers, programs and activities as they are today. Also, we ask that an advisory question be added to the ballot.

The \$2.5 million cut significantly compromises the quality of education in our schools, therefore we ask you to let the voters decide

Sincerely,

The Newtown Middle School PTA members

XX

To Whom it May Concern:

Unfortunately my husband and I are unable to attend the budget meetings occurring this week due to prior commitments, but we wanted to send an email to all LC members to express our opinion of this years' budget.

We are lifelong residents of Newtown, both of us have gone through the school systems in town and we have watched the town and budget grow throughout the years. We now have 2 children, ages 14 and 10 currently enrolled at RIS & NHS and although we are happy with the education they are receiving, we just cannot afford another budget increase again this year. Both of us are employed full time and even with two incomes, we are finding it hard to keep up with the tax growth in town.

I hope our opinion will be considered throughout the budget deliberations.

Respectfully,

Robert & Susan Shaw

XX

I am a resident of Sandy Hook, Connecticut. When my husband and I embarked upon the adventure of purchasing our first home almost 9 years ago, it was imperative to both of us that we reside in a town with a reputable school district. We ultimately selected Newtown as the town in which we wished to reside, in large part because of the quality of the education system. At that time we did not have any children, and since then, we have had two sons. We have been pleased with our older son's experience at Sandy Hook School.

My husband and I are avid proponents of a reputable school system that provides a well-rounded education to the youth of our town. He and I both have post-graduate degrees and we attended some of the finest higher education schools in the country; my husband attended Cornell University and I attended Amherst College. I do not mention this in order to fulfill a selfish need to boast. I mention this in order to impress upon you the quality of education that we, and many other parents in Newtown, expect from our school system. As parents, we expect our school system to assist us in the achievement of various educational goals that we have for our children. More importantly, however, we expect our school system to assist us in molding well-rounded adolescents that then transform into well-rounded and enlightened adults.

In order for the Newtown school system to produce such well-rounded individuals, it must be provided the resources it needs for more than simply the basics. It must have resources to maintain, and even expand, the programs that set this school system apart from many school districts in the state.

It is for these reasons, in primary part, that I respectfully request that the proposed \$2.5 million cuts be restored to the education budget. The quality of our children's education, and their transformation into adulthood, depend on these resources being restored and this town continuing in its commitment to maintain a top-notch school system.

While I realize that the economic climate has been challenging, to say the least, our children should not be made to pay for the sins of a collective societal greed that ultimately caused the biggest financial crisis since The Great Depression. If need be, other portions of the budget may have to defer to the intellectual health and growth of the children of Newtown.

In closing, please ensure that the proposed cuts to the education budget are restored.

Sincerely,
Farah Mollo Sposato

XX

Dear Legislative Council Members,

The Newtown Board of Finance, by a vote of 4-2, has recommended a budget proposal which includes a \$2.5 million reduction to the Board of Education's proposed budget. It is our understanding that around \$1.3

million in savings will be realized resulting from a reduction in the cost of items such as health insurance, heating oil, and fuel (diesel/gas).

Out of the proposed cut of \$2.5M, this means that \$1.2 million in reductions will still need to be made by the Board of Education if this proposed budget passes. Currently, this proposed budget does not include any new programs for the district. Significant reductions are being considered throughout the district that could have critical long-term implications, including the increase of class sizes in some circumstances.

As Newtown taxpayers, we request that an amount up to \$1.2 million be restored to the Newtown education budget so that programs may be maintained at this year's standards. We understand that contract negotiations are underway with Newtown bus drivers which if successful may net an additional savings of \$500K, making it beneficial to restore \$700k to the education budget. We look forward to better circumstances in the future when our school district will have the opportunity to progress toward its goal of being third in our District Reference Group (DRG) with increased funding.

Respectfully from Newtown PTA Presidents,

Sarah Beier
Satra Arokium
Maggie Conway
Stacie Doyle
Tracy Holman
Marabeth Pereira
Jen Scarangella
Lisa Wallace

XX

To the Legislative Council -

I am writing to ask once again for you to consider adding some funds back to the BOE Budget. I appreciate the feedback that I received from several members of the Legislative Council expressing "understanding" for my concerns, but I continue to feel ignored and unrepresented by evidence of your decisions. While I appreciate the gesture of so many phone calls being made by one member in particular, I prefer to connect via email.

In following the flow of your decision-making process in the local press, I understand that you have chosen to dismiss certain letters, emails and requests made at the public hearing, while instead representing only the population that has asked you to cut their taxes. I am sympathetic to that group and understand that in this time, we have to make smart decisions. However, we need to find a better way to to be fiscally responsible - the yearly spring dismantling of the school system is unacceptable and the result of poor planning by this town that outdates many residents. Find a way to compromise so that all taxpayers and voters can be represented by you.

Many current members of the LC are fortunate enough to hold their positions because you spoke of a support for students and education. In fact, copies of some of your very own election materials are being circulated to demonstrate how far reality is from the campaign promises. As exhausted, frustrated parents start to come to terms with what seems to be happening, we start to look ahead not to referendums, but to elections.

Thank You,

Heather Smith
22 Wills Road

XX

To Councilmembers Amaral, Andras, Aurelia, Belden, Capeci, Davis, Fergusun, Fitzgerald, Jacob, Larocque, Spragg, and Woycik; and Boardmembers Bittman, Fetchick, Gaines, Hart, Lagana, Leidlein, and Nanavaty:

I am unable to attend tonight's meeting but want you to know that I strongly urge the members of the Legislative Council to reinstate \$1.2 million dollars to Newtown's education budget. I believe that the proposed cuts will significantly compromise the quality of education in our town.

However, I realize that there are differing opinions on the matter, and that the current economic climate complicates some individual decisions.

This is why I strongly believe that it is your obligation as representatives of the taxpaying citizens of Newtown to allow the voting public, not you, as an advisory arm of the town, to decide whether the amount requested by the BOE is justified and affordable.

Let the voters of Newtown decide.

Respectfully,

Lynn Edwards

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Please vote to restore \$1.2 million to the education budget so that services and programs can be maintained at this year's level.

Thank you for your time.

Ticia Mullins

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX176

I am deeply concerned with the proposed Middle School budget cuts. I understand times are tough; however, the slashing of a crucial group of cluster teachers and a critical Spanish teacher should NOT be up for consideration. These teachers are the foundation of the Middle School educational experience. These are very formative years in a child's development and these teachers and classes are a necessity for a competitive education in today's society. Please do not let these critical teaching positions be disposed of.

I am not happy about the elimination of the Consumer Science and Computer Technology Programs, however, I realize you have a tough job to do and would (as I tell my children) get over it.

Also, I have absolutely no problem with the elmination of the after school activities. They are nice to have but I'd much rather my child had a decent education first. May I suggest having families pay a fee to the coach or teacher in charge of a particular after school activity to keep these programs going?

To sum up keep the critical teaching positions in place. Thank you for your time and remember the children and families whose lives you will be affecting when you cast your vote.

Angela Silver

7 Old Bethel Road

Newtown, CT 06470