

From: "Paul Lundquist" <plundquist@harrisongroupinc.com>
Subject: **Your question; my answers**
Date: May 17, 2011 12:12:28 PM EDT
To: <mjacob4404@charter.net>, <kfetchick@charter.net>

Hi Mary Ann and Kathy,

First, your questions...

1. Why did you or your family members vote or not vote?

Wife and I both voted. We're tuned in enough to know when a referendum takes place. However, I know several people who were not aware, and a few others who assumed it would pass without their Yes vote. More publicity and coordinated 'go vote' message would have helped... instead message was, "all's well" followed at the last minute with "all's well but, uh-oh, I hope people still go out and vote." Total voting numbers were down across the Yes and No votes equally, so I don't believe low turnout meant that it was just the Yes voters who stayed home. Because of the lame response across the board, I wished for a do-over. However, the reductions proposed were expected (but IMO were as deep as we should ever allow). I question whether the BOE should (or even will) eliminate all those EA's, but that whole issue just made me more skeptical of their strategy and philosophy regarding the budget. Not to say the cuts aren't real and potentially painful, I just don't believe the BOE can accurately articulate how the reductions will impact the real budget. But saying all those EAs will be eliminated is inflammatory, at best.

2. What is your opinion on the latest requested budget amount?

I'm supporting the budget, but...

I wasn't planning to take the time to write an email to answer your questions because I felt comfortable allowing the traditional process at the polls play out (with an assumption that the budget will pass this time/today). However, I'm hearing more and more about people willing to vote NO with the hope that the LC will add money back to the schools instead. I'm mostly writing today to say I think this is a misguided strategy and a reckless assumption this time around. I truly hope that cooler heads prevail and the budget passes. However, if it doesn't pass, and additional cuts are imposed on the BOE budget, I will in all likelihood vote NO next time. I know I'm not alone with this thought. No further cuts should be made to the BOE budget (unless the BOE offers suggestions based on new savings that come to light).

The primary public message I'd encourage you to share is this: education supporters need to get on the same page. I completely understand the scrutiny and skepticism some people feel toward the BOE budget and the rationale behind it. I'd put myself in that camp, too. Typically, the more a person seeks to understand the details, the more they question the processes and strategies that drive the costs. For good or for bad, most people come away believing that more can be done to work more efficiently and also leverage synergies with town-side operations. But these types of savings are not going to be identified in the midst of the referendum season. The BOE needs to proactively create a special subcommittee – comprised of BOE members, LC education subcommittee members, someone from the BOF and 2-3 members of the public. This group should convene from June through October to study business issues and strategies to better understand the inside-costs of running the schools. Are there still significant cost duplications with the town-side? Is Newtown really overly burdened with administrative staff or are we lean and efficient after all? Bring all the benchmarking data being thrown around into the proper forum. This special committee can vet all of the public suggestions offered on the facebook discussion pages, NewtownPatch and The Bee. Pick the brains of the people who are most vocally critical of the BOE budget to understand why/what ideas do they have to improve? If this process is done well, in a very public setting, it will help educate the public, and will encourage buy-in from the LC, BOF and traditional fence-sitters who would support the budget if they didn't think it was so bloated.

Ok, I'll stop rambling. I just didn't want all the "coordinated advocacy" bouncing around in emails today to speak for me.

Hope the budget passes! If it doesn't, please find a way to protect the BOE budget or there will likely be a major wave of NO-voting education supporters to reject the next round. And that would suck!

Have fun,

Paul

PS: feel free to share this with others in whatever way is most appropriate

Paul Lundquist
President
Harrison Group, Inc.
One Exchange Place
Waterbury, CT 06702
203-573-0400 x114

From: Karen <kcpierce@aol.com>
Subject: **Response to vote survey**
Date: May 17, 2011 11:12:24 AM EDT
To: merola1lc@sbcglobal.net, bspragg9274@charter.net, george-ferguson@earthlink.net, janandras@yahoo.com, rdwoycik@sbcglobal.net, amaralpoggy@aol.com, gbdavis88@charter.net, jbeldenpootatuck@yahoo.com, jeff@thecapecis.com, kevinkis@aol.com, mjacob4404@charter.net, kfetchick@charter.net

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Legislative Council:

In response to the question regarding voting on the budget referendum:

I voted 'yes' for the first referendum not to increase taxes or support either side of the budget but as a sign of appreciation to all those who participated in the process and worked collectively to present a budget to the public that reflected the needs of Town and BOE as presented by our elected representatives.

My vote today, and possibly in upcoming referendums, reflects a deep belief that education is the critical path to a great society, especially a democratic society. My grandparents, immigrants from Europe, instilled this belief in their children and them in us. In my family, education is not an option, it is a social imperative. Should money continue to be cut from education my vote will remain steadfastly "No".

Respectfully,


Karen C. Pierce

10 Chestnut Hill Road

Sandy Hook

Karen

From: Sue/Bob <rj12495@sbcglobal.net>
Subject: Budget Opinion
Date: May 17, 2011 1:11:03 PM EDT
To: mjacob4404@charter.net, kfetchick@charter.net
▶ 2 Attachments, 21.9 KB



Hello Mary Ann and Kathy,


We wanted to respond to your request for the publics' viewpoint on the budget.

1. My husband and I voted because we feel strongly that our vote counts, especially when it comes to the budget.
2. Honestly, every year we have voted "no" on the budget increases. The increases have to be stopped at some point. We understand that the costs of everything are increasing, but many residents are not getting increases at their jobs to keep up with their increasing taxes, no matter what size, that is, if they are even fortunate to have a job anymore.

We have both lived here our entire lives and the tax increases every year are out of control. We had always planned on raising our children and enjoying our future retirement here in town, but we've already come to the realization that if things aren't brought under control soon, we will have to try to sell our home (in a terrible market!) and leave the area. The majority that vote for these increases appear to be people that either work in the school system, or families that move in, stay only a few years and then are transferred somewhere else for their job, leaving those of us that are raising our families here with the burden!

Thank you for allowing us and other residents to express our opinions. We greatly appreciate that and the time and energy you both spend volunteering on the Council.

Susan & Bob Shaw



From: priscilla jones <boylejones@gmail.com>
Subject: **vote**
Date: May 17, 2011 7:42:01 PM EDT
To: Mary Ann Jacob <mjacob4404@charter.net>, kfetchick@charter.net

Dear Ms Jacobs and Ms Fetchick,

I voted **yes** on the previous budget in spite of the fact that I **do not** think the budget increase was ENOUGH. I believe the school system does well, but I think we lag behind many districts (both in and out of our DRG) in terms of technology. **I would be willing to pay more in taxes** to improve and increase technology availability and instruction at the elementary and middle school levels. I believe it is the job of the school board and the school administrators to determine what they need.

I believed the previous budget amount was right for the current economic climate. I appreciated the collaboration that occurred between Pat Llodra and William Hart, and I was saddened by the low turn out of voters.

I voted today, again a yes vote, because I DO NOT WANT TO SEE ANY MORE MONEY removed from the budget.

Please include my comments if you choose to share any results from your "survey" with the other members of the LC at tomorrow's meeting.

Thank you,
Priscilla Jones
5 Meadow Road

From: David Wheeler <davidcolewheeler@gmail.com>

Subject: Referendum vote

Date: May 17, 2011 7:50:58 PM EDT

To: bspragg9274@charter.net, Jeff@theCapecis.com, janandras@yahoo.com, gdavisicd2@aol.com, Kevin Fitzgerald <kevinkis@aol.com>, george-ferguson@earthlink.net, jbeldenpootatuck@yahoo.com, amaralpoggy@aol.com, rdwoycik@sbcglobal.net, mjacob4404@charter.net, merola1lc@sbcglobal.net, kfatchick@charter.net

Members of the Legislative Council:

I just returned from voting on the budget referendum and feel that in light of recent circumstances an explanation of my vote for the purposes of clarity is warranted. I voted against the budget referendum as I feel the amount designated for the Newtown school system is too low; I support a reasonable increase in tax rates to fully fund the education of the children of Newtown. It is my hope the education budget will be increased to support the current needs of our school system.

Thank you,

David Wheeler

From: "Amy McCarthy" <amymccarthy@charter.net>
Subject: **Fw: budget opinion**
Date: May 17, 2011 8:04:38 AM EDT
To: <kfetchick@charter.net>

From: [Amy McCarthy](#)
Sent: Tuesday, May 17, 2011 8:03 AM
To: mjacob4404@charter.net ; kfetchcik@charter.net
Subject: budget opinion

1. Both adults voted in the past election because we wanted the budget to pass.
 2. Our opinion is that we should move from a town wide voting system to one where the elected representatives develop and pass the budget. We believe that the education budget has been underfunded for several years.
- Amy & Dan McCarthy
9 Narragansett Trail

From: Mary Ann Jacob <mjacob4404@charter.net>
Subject: **Fwd: Budget Input**
Date: May 17, 2011 9:19:02 AM EDT
To: Kathy and Jeff Fetchick and Family <kfetchick@charter.net>

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: [REDACTED]
Date: May 17, 2011 8:14:44 AM EDT
To: "mjacob4404@charter.net" <mjacob4404@charter.net>
Subject: Budget Input
Reply-To: [REDACTED]

Ms. Jacob:

I voted no on the first budget. I will vote no again today.

I believe the town government and school system need to deliver a zero percent growth budget to the citizens. We continue to be in unfavorable economic times and there will be no robust growth to lift government revenues just as there will be none in the foreseeable future to lift my economic status.

Newtown needs to be more efficient in providing services to citizens and I'm willing to see a reduction in those to achieve an actual reduction in the budget rather than just zero percent growth. For example, when I moved to Newtown in 1977 the roads were 'rough' but safe. Just patch the roads to maintain safety but do not repave. That will also offer double benefit of reducing speed as drivers want to avoid discomfort.

I believe the school system too long acted as an independent 'fiefdom' seemingly not responsible to anyone but itself. I've seen a new attitude there per what I read in the Bee, but I am sure they can be more efficient. The teacher union arrogantly refused to renegotiate salaries and benefits a year or two ago when other town unions agreed to do that to save jobs. That should be addressed again and certainly in the next contract negotiations. By the way, I have skin in that game because my four grand kids attend our schools.

Newtown is a good place to live but times changed and will continue to be challenging and the government needs to adjust to a long term financial stagnation. In business there is saying, 'work expands to fill the time allotted'. That is true for governments - 'give it more money through taxes, fees, etc., and it will find a way to spend it all'.

You are right that I will not attend a budget meeting. Those among us who have no concern about their financial situation and those with a 'special interest' will do the usual 'in your face' style of attack and/or shout down their fellow citizen. I find that deplorable at every level of government.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration. I wish to remain anonymous.

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: anonymous opinion
Date: May 17, 2011 9:19:44 AM EDT
To: "Fetchick, Kathy" <kfetchick@charter.net>, "Jacob, Mary Ann" <mjacob4404@charter.net>
Reply-To: [REDACTED]

Good Morning Ladies,

I'm weighing in - anonymously, if you don't mind.

I voted yes the first time around b/c I thought it was a fair budget.
I will vote yes today b/c I don't want anymore cuts to the town side.

In talking to people over the weekend what I heard most was that the school side needs to reduce their request. One person said he will continue to vote no until they 4th AP is removed from the request and his friends feel the same way.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] they all feel that Pat has done a great job and think Janet has to do more. (I personally feel the EA decision is a scare tactic).

Lastly, I cannot have your attention without telling you that I do not believe any money should be restored to the education budget, as it was last year. I think it was a mistake last year and it will be very damaging to the town morale if it is restored again. Department heads have not gotten an increase in 3 years and some have lost employees due to budget cuts - while the education administration continues to hire and have gotten increases, some between \$9,000-\$15,000, in the same time period.

[REDACTED]

From: Jane Audet <jaudet@charter.net>

Subject: **Survey questions**

Date: May 17, 2011 9:49:45 AM EDT

To: kevinkis@aol.com, bspragg9274@charter.net, Jeff@theCapecis.com, janandras@yahoo.com, gdavislcd2@aol.com, george-ferguson@earthlink.net, jbeldenpootatuck@yahoo.com, amaralpoggy@aol.com, rdwoycik@sbcglobal.net, mjacob4404@charter.net, merola1lc@sbcglobal.net, kfetchick@charter.net

Answers to the survey questions...

1. Why did you or your family members vote or not vote?

I voted because I want a say in how our tax dollars are spent. Also, I'm concerned about the quality of education in Newtown and the direction of the town.

2. What is your opinion on the latest requested budget amount?

I was disappointed that the budget didn't pass even though I wasn't looking forward to a tax increase. I did feel the budget was a fair budget and was thrilled to see the town and school working together. It felt united for the first time in a long time. The thing I am most concerned about with the most recent cuts is the reduction in EA's in the school budget. It's hard to see how without them we can serve ALL the kids in the classroom. There are MANY children who struggle but don't fall within the special education umbrella. That extra help and attention is essential. I know first hand as my daughter needed those services until we could figure out what was causing her learning issues. Without them, she wouldn't have learned the material and her self esteem would have suffered. There are so many kids just like my daughter. As it is, we don't have ENOUGH EA's.

The other line item reductions are hard to comment on because I don't know for sure what the specific daily/long-term impact is. I guess my feeling at this point is we DO have to have a lean budget but there has to be a point at which we say, "this is too much". We can't have everything but in my mind we have to have in place all the support systems necessary to serve ALL students. And lastly, I worry about our goals as a school district. Not investing ANY/ENOUGH money in a long-term plan will catch up with us. If we're not buying equipment and materials or keep putting off repairs and upgrades, we'll fall apart. A slow and steady approach, with a plan the town is committed to seems lacking. Yes, times are tough. We all feel the impact of the recession and floundering economy. I know people who are out of work or are dealing with pay cuts etc. My husband is working in San Diego away from his family to keep things going. We do what we have to do but we have to keep in mind that we can't keep cutting to the bone without some thought of the future. My older daughter's graduating high school this year and my impression is the high school is mediocre. The math department definitely needs help, guidance is overwhelmed, and there are not enough classes being offered (I know they're working on that) to name a few shortages. I think the elementary schools do an amazing job of working with what they have and that is a testament to the teachers and administration (We are in Hawley district).

I'm hoping voters will show up today. I think people may have read the lack of contentiousness this budget season as "everything must be fine. I don't need to show up". We'll see. By the way, do you broadcast all the budget meetings? I am not able to attend most and rely on friends who detail the meetings for us.

Thanks for your time, and my husband and I appreciate your service.

Jane & Craig Audet
115 Alberts Hill Road
Sandy Hook

From: "Paul Lagnese" <plagwood@charter.net>
Subject: **Voting**
Date: May 17, 2011 11:41:34 PM EDT
To: <mjacob4404@charter.net>, <kfetchick@charter.net>

To:
Mary Ann Jacob
Kathy Fetchick,

I voted no on the budget the first time because I think it was asking too much of the taxpayers. The world is in a recession and government should be aware of the fact. Jobs are being scaled back and or lost completely. I myself have seen my income drop almost by half and yet those in charge of our town budget are still looking to get more of my hard earned money. Where am I to get the money they are asking for? Government officials need to be more in touch with the public and the ongoing economic problems. The fact that they can not seem to keep the budget on at the very least a zero increase is absolutely astounding. The majority of the population has scaled back on expenditures because they can no longer afford what they could just a few short years ago. The elected leaders should also be doing the same. Their salaries and benefits come out of the pocket of the taxpayers who right now are struggling to make ends meet and yet they want more of our meager pie.

I think that the latest budget proposal is also too high. It needs to be brought into line with reality. No one likes to give things up but in this economic climate that is exactly what needs to happen. If I lost my job I do not have the option of going to my neighbors and forcing them to give me enough money to keep up my life style. Likely I would wind up in jail or worse. The government officials have not yet come to understand this idea. Enough is enough already. The budget should be lowered or at the very least we should be given an opportunity to opt out of the increase.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Lagnese

From: "Chuck and Judy Dubois" <chuckjudydubois@charter.net>
Subject: **My response to budget**
Date: May 17, 2011 5:44:20 PM EDT
To: <bspragg9274@charter.net>, <Jeff@theCapecis.com>, <janandras@yahoo.com>, <gdavislcd2@aol.com>, <kevinkis@aol.com>, <george-ferguson@earthlink.net>, <jbeldenpootatuck@yahoo.com>, <amaralpoggy@aol.com>, <rdwoycik@sbcglobal.net>, <mjacob4404@charter.net>, <merola1lc@sbcglobal.net>, <kfetchick@charter.net>

Hello LC Members

Especially if today does not pass I wanted to give my input.....

Please tell us why you or your family members voted or did not vote

Both my husband and I voted. We are very concerned with our schools and thinking that we may need to consider private school, if school funding continues to get stripped. I have friends in town that say people like me who are "involved" will take care of voting in what the schools need. I believe there is a lot of apathy in this town and that too many people are just too busy, especially since there's been no big stink like during last years budget.

What is your opinion on the latest requested budget amount?

We want the budget to pass as is and do not want any additional moneys taken from our schools. I think the budget is a fair compromise between keeping taxes low and keeping services almost at par. I do feel that the elimination of the EA positions will hurt our elementary kids but I will send that concern to the BOE.

All I can say is that everywhere I go in town from carmenuccios to the nail salons to sporting events with gear on sale to other Newtown restaurants, it is packed and people are spending, spending. Let's use it for our educations.

Thank you
Judy and Chuck Dubois
7 Marlin Rd, Sandy Hook