

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



TOWN OF NEWTOWN

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2015
NEWTOWN MUNICIPAL CENTER, NEWTOWN, CT**

PRESENT: George Ferguson, Joe Girgasky, Paul Lundquist, Bob Merola, Ryan Knapp, Neil Chaudhary, Mary Ann Jacob, Tony Filiato, Phil Carroll, Dan Honan.

ABSENT: Eva Bermudez, Dan Amaral

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman Pat Llodra, Assistant Superintendent Linda Gejda, Board of Ed members Keith Alexander, Kathy Hamilton, Michelle Ku, John Vouros, 6 members of the public and 2 members of the press.

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Jacob called the hearing to order at 7:00pm.

VOTER COMMENT:

Kinga Walsh of 21 Horseshoe Ridge Rd and Karen Holden of 68 Berkshire Rd. spoke as co-chairs for the Newtown Education Advocacy Group. Statement attached.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further comments, the hearing was adjourned at 7:05.

Respectfully Submitted,

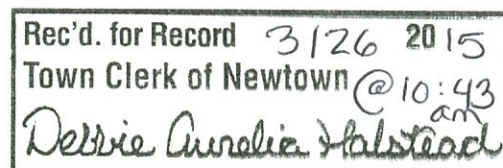


Carey Schierloh

Recording Secretary

Attachments: Statement, Letters

These are draft minutes and as such are subject to correction by the Legislative Council at the next regular meeting. All corrections will be determined in minutes of the meeting at which they were corrected.



From: "Patrick & Kathleen McCleary"
Date: March 25, 2015 at 5:48:30 PM EDT

Members of the Council

Unfortunately, we cannot make tonight's public forum due to a prior commitment. As such, we're writing urging you to adopt the budget as currently drafted.

In particular, we'd object to any efforts or dialogue suggesting a reduction in education spending. The dialogue by some officials to date—including members of the Board of Education and Board of Finance—claims this is a status quo budget. It absolutely is not. It is in fact, a reduction in educational services as existing resources are asked to do more. Further dialogue suggesting that reduced enrollment (or the projection of reduced enrollment) should equate to proportional reductions in the budget is, at best, simplistic & intellectually lazy. So, while we're not fully satisfied with the current budget we—like you—prefer the community reach a consensus as quickly as possible. Let's avoid the contentious debates of the recent past and move this forward.

Thanks for your consideration.

Patrick & Kathleen McCleary
10 Main Street
Newtown, CT 06470

From: Chris Marion
Date: March 25, 2015 at 11:00:38 AM EDT
Subject: Legislative Council Public Hearing Reminder and Budget

Legislative Council Members,

Per the email below regarding the budget I won't be able to be at the meeting, but want to share my thoughts regarding the budget.

I believe that superintendent Erardi and leadership has done a very good job and fully support him in most areas. However, I do believe that it would go a long way for the school budget to not grow this year. I understand and appreciate that they have worked really hard to keep the increase to a small number, but given the increase in costs and taxes everywhere else a zero budget increase says a lot.

Thanks,
Chris Marion
8 Brookwood Dr
Newtown, CT 06470

To the members of the Legislative Council,

First, thank you for your service to our town. I am unable to attend tonight's meeting but would like to express my request that you move forward the Education Budget without any reductions. As some of you know, I try to stay informed throughout the budget process as it progresses from Dr. Erardi and through the BOE and BOF. I believe this year's Education budget is a responsible one that takes into account declining enrollment while maintaining minimum necessary services and beginning to address the increased technology needs in the district. As a taxpayer, I would be willing to pay more for our children's education. But I am willing to support this budget, and I encourage you to support it as is, and let the voters decide if it should be adopted.

Respectfully,

Lynn Edwards
3 Sand Hill Road
Sandy Hook

We sit before you tonight as co-chairs for the Newtown Education Advocacy Group. We have been collaborating with Central Office and Newtown PTAs and PTSA on education and advocacy efforts for the April 2015 vote.

Our message is simple: please support the proposed education budget as is and pass it through to the voters.

The current budget not only maintains current programs and services, it also accounts for the declining enrollment in our district. More importantly it offers growth and enhancement opportunities through recommendations for programs, such as; the pilot of world language in Kindergarten, expansion of the GATES program, a HS academic officer to help our students succeed, stipends for sports teams to grow after school opportunities and keep kids safe, and the support and expansion of the NICE program.

Central Office and the BOE continue to add programs and make changes with the best interest of our children in mind. Working with the BOF, additional savings were identified that do not negatively impact our children's education or instruction. The collaboration we have personally witnessed is reassuring and refreshing. This team work is positive and has resulted in continued programs and services and educational enhancements, while identifying savings that do not negatively impact education, and, in our opinion, works to satisfy the needs of our students and the community.

Any further reductions to the education budget will have a direct, negative impact on programs and our children. We want to continue to provide a high quality education to Newtown's children. Again, please pass through the total proposed education budget and let the voters decide.

Thank you