
From:  Budget 2021
Carolyn Baker <bakerclb@gmail.com>

Tuesday, May 5, 2020 12:03:11 PM



Subject: Fwd:

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  **Zachary Smith**

Given the extreme intensity of the shock from the coronavirus to all of our lives, there are many calls to take advantage of the potential economic impact of COVID-19 to achieve a goal of gutting Redding, making demands without offering any solutions. Frankly this is a disappointing strategy, not lending itself to achieving actual results.

As a community we should step back and not let fear dominate the discussion. We should be wary of headlines and single data points driving decision making. We should be very careful pointing to historical economic events to project present day results.

A faulted demand is a 5-10% budget cut being key to sustainability. A cut of this magnitude cut is not going to slow the rate of potential tax payer defaults, it is not going to improve home values, and undermines the sustainability of a functioning school and town. This is not a picture of a sustainable future for Redding.

I ask the Board of Finance to take a close look at the proposals of both Board of Education and Board of Selectman, support the well explained Board of Education budget and ask the Board of Selectman to better identify the non-essential spending in their budget, including non-contractual salary increases.

Thank you,

Carolyn

Carolyn Baker
15 Indian Hill Rd

From:  Budget 2021
Christina Parrinello <christina.parrinello@gmail.com>

Mon, May 4, 2020 8:04:16 PM



Subject: Fwd: Proposed 2020-2021 Budget

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  Zachary Smith

Dear Members of the Redding Board of Finance,

We would like to voice our strong support for the proposed budget that would enable sufficient funding of our schools, and express concern about the undemocratic manner in which a critical decision for our community is being made. We understand that a typical vote on the matter would be reckless under current conditions, so we are reaching out now to ask that you pass the budget as proposed.

Cutting the education budget in the face of an economic downturn is dangerously shortsighted. Doing this now, after students have been faced with unprecedented learning challenges, could turn an economic crisis into an irreversible decline in the viability of the town and a lesson in long-term downward mobility for its young people.

We are all scared and anxious about what is to come. But making our schools less capable and less competitive will likely have a net negative impact on this town's ability to survive. Asking our students to enter the college market and the job market with less will only result in the loss of students with the means and support to go elsewhere, and make the town less appealing for both current and potential future Redding residents.

Sincerely,

Christina Parrinello & Alexander Mir
42 Pine Mountain Rd

From:  Budget 2021
Darrell Bradford <dprpb2@yahoo.com>

Tuesday, May 5, 2020 6:43:08 AM



Subject: Fwd: Support Redding BOE Budget

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  **Zachary Smith**

Dear Members of the Redding Board of Finance,

I am writing to implore you to **pass the Board of Education budget** as presented to you. I think you should know that I am both a Parent of two school-aged children in the Redding schools (Grades 5 and 7) AND a senior citizen, having retired from industry one year ago. In the past, our town has been somewhat divided on the subject of the BOE budget with parents generally supporting the school budget and seniors, who typically live on fixed incomes, demanding budget cuts. As a senior citizen myself, living on social security and my retirement savings, I am sympathetic to those who would like to see the budget reduced...but this is not the time.

Like most families, we moved to Redding 10 years ago for the quality of the schools. However, previous cuts to the K-8 school budget have already taken a toll on general education with larger class sizes and diminished services. Further cuts will have a real negative impact on our students. It is not fair to cut the budget on the backs of our students. Our children have suffered enough and using this crisis as an excuse to cut the school budget is unacceptable.

Our children need our support now more than ever during these unprecedented times. They are facing a learning challenge unlike anything we had to endure as children.

The schools may even face unplanned, unbudgeted expenditures as a direct result of the ongoing crisis. To ensure the safety of our students, as well as our teachers, administrators, and support staff, it may be necessary to implement changes to our education model in order to maintain social distancing; changes to busing and transportation; more frequent, deep cleaning of the school buildings; purchasing new or additional computer equipment to replace aging equipment and support distance learning; to name a few. Most enterprises across the U.S., including businesses, non-profits, cities and towns, schools and universities, will incur substantial costs as the nation responds to and recovers from this pandemic. Like it or not, this is to be expected.

Next year our students will be starting the year behind the learning curve because distance learning has not been as effective as in-person, classroom instruction. A second wave of the virus – which is now predicted by most scientists and researchers – may trigger another, extended period of school closure and distance learning. Recovering in the aftermath of the pandemic requires resources to close achievement gaps brought forth by the sudden pivot to distance learning.

Though these are difficult times, panic-induced cuts will unnecessarily and negatively affect our town for many years to come. Ultimately, cuts to the school budget lead to a deterioration in the quality and rating of our schools, which negatively affects home values and every resident.

Let's not be "penny-wise and pound-foolish". Please PASS the Board of Education budget as presented.

Thank you.

Darrell Bradford
93 Cross Hwy., Redding CT 06896

From:  Budget 2021
Emily Corse <emily.of.corse@gmail.com>

Sunday, May 3, 2020 8:58:11 PM



Subject: Fwd: Budget 2021

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  Zachary Smith

Dear Members of the Board of Finance,

We write to express our support of the proposed 2021 budgets. We are the parents of two Redding Elementary School distance learners. We are already concerned that our kids will start the next school year behind where they would have been minus the pandemic, and realistically making up this gap will require more resources, not less. Thus, it is really not the time for budget cuts.

Sincerely
Emily Corse
Ben Collins
42 LedgeWood Road

From:  Budget 2021
 howard sherman <hsherman309@gmail.com>

Tue, May 5, 2020 11:55:22 AM



Subject: Fwd: Upcoming Budget

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  **Zachary Smith**

Dear Town of Redding Board of Finance:

The Covid crisis has taken an enormous human and economic toll, Connecticut along with its neighboring states of New York and New Jersey have been impacted harder than other regions in the country.

The ironic thing about this crisis is that the scientific community has been predicting a pandemic for well over a decade. And we have had some very close calls with the swine flu, Ebola, The Tika Virus, among many others. But yet, the toll that today's crisis has taken is greater than it needed to be by virtue of lack of preparation.

We will ultimately get through this, but not before significant damage has been done in loss of life and tremendous economic stress including a historic loss of jobs.

From a town perspective, we have much to learn from what we are going through. Most importantly, we are learning that the consequences of not being prepared are significant. Many of our residents have been impacted by the virus directly. Many have become seriously ill, some have lost their lives and many have lost their livelihoods.

So this is the time for leadership from our elected officials. We count on you to make wise decisions that don't just rely on the past but anticipate the future. If ever there was a time for our elected leaders to be "looking around the corner" it is now.

We anticipate that many of our town residents will remain under financial duress in the coming year and beyond. As a result we should anticipate the *possibility* that our town revenues, which are virtually 100% property tax based, may see a shortfall in the near future. We should anticipate this possibility and ask our officials to develop a plan that anticipates this possibility.

Given the uncertainty, I ask that the finance committee develop two plans. The first should anticipate a modest overall decrease in the overall budget of 5%. The 2nd contingency plan should consider a much deeper reduction in the event town revenues do not materialize to the level hoped for. Many surrounding communities are looking at a town budget reduction of 20-30%. This is painful, but prudent since we are in uncharted waters. We would be foolish to not have a contingency plan that anticipates a worst case scenario. Reacting after the fact will be even more costly.

I also implore the town to consider the challenges facing our residence. If a Redding Family has lost its

source of income due to the crisis, we should seek ways to support them, not punish them. Forcing tax payments in the short term that may result in resident losing there homes is not a ethical nor responsible strategy. Nor is raising taxes, which will make Redding's appeal as a community to live in even more challenged than it was before the crisis. The board of finance needs to be creative and innovative.

Thank you and the residence of Redding are counting on you to do the right things.

Howard Sherman

From:  Budget 2021
Jean Rexford <jeanrexford@aol.com>

Tuesday, May 5, 2020 5:45:35 AM



Subject: Fwd: Heritage Center and programming for seniors

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  **Zachary Smith**

Before the pandemic, the Heritage Center was an increasingly vital hub for our growing senior population. And during the pandemic it has maintained its vitality. Just as an example, I continue to teach my stretch class, on zoom, daily at 5 pm. I am a volunteer and they have made extraordinary use of volunteers to meet senior needs.

But we need a full and well paid staff -In order to maximize and better coordinate that volunteerism. And support of our social workers - please make them full time. The needs of our community have changed. We need newer and better technology for outreach and support of seniors and or the community as a whole

Thank you

Jean Rexford
Sent from my iPad

From:  Budget 2021
James Lang <operaa1@optonline.net>

Tuesday, May 5, 2020 8:58:05 AM



Subject: Fwd: May 5th BOF Budget Meeting

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  **Zachary Smith**

I am a strong supporter of quality education for all. Though we haven't had students in the system for 22 plus years, we are happy to pay taxes ensuring today's Redding Children k-12 will have the same quality education in 2020-2021 that our kids received. Many comments on Town Board Websites want budgets frozen, even reduced. I want them reduced 5 to 10%. The current budget for educating K-8 is \$22,573,396. This is the proposed cost to educate 840 students. Using simple division, this equates to \$27,000/student. That's one of the highest costs/student in the state. I have spoken, to some parents, with kids currently in the system, who don't believe we are getting our monies worth. I hope the board is listening because the frustration is high. I haven't been in the budget weeds to understand why our educational costs are so much higher than much of the rest of the state. Everyone in the town has the best interests of our students in mind. Due to the expected property tax defaults driven by an unemployment rate nearing 20% in Redding we will face fiscal pressures to reduce costs. It's time to reengineer our practices to reduce costs, at the same time retaining the quality education my kids received 20 years ago. Respectfully Jim Lang, Redding Ridge

From:  Budget 2021
Joan-Marie Bresnahan <jmbres39@yahoo.com>

Thu, Apr 30, 2020 9:41:19 PM



Subject: Fwd: Budget

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  Krista Gramer  Zachary Smith

When this pandemic grinds to a close and businesses start up again, there will be more than a few companies that will not be able to weather the economics. The jobs people were expecting to resume will not be there for them. This will lead to more foreclosures in town and fewer taxes collected.

This must be considered very seriously when setting up the town budget. Decreases rather than increases should be implemented.

Please keep this thought in mind when setting the budget.

Joan-Marie Bresnahan

From:  Julia Pemberton
info@townofreddingct.org

Monday, April 27, 2020 4:07:50 PM



Subject: Fwd: New submission from Contact Us

To:  mpthompson@grsm.com  mytopstonecpa@optonline.net

Cc:  Kim Yonkers  Ward Mazzucco  **Steve Gniadek**

FYI - If the individual submitting comment is not present, I will read their comment into the record. If they are present, they will be required to read their comment for the record.

----- Original Message -----

What does this comment regard?

Budget Issues

Please include any questions or comments:

Our youngest citizens have been asked to forego a portion of their childhood -- months of milestones, memories and rites of passage have been taken away. No laughs with classmates, in fact, almost no interaction at all with their friends and very little with their teachers. No field trips, no proms, no field days, no recess, no virtually anything -- and all in the name of a shared sacrifice for the literal health of our town.

And yet, the calls to once again cut from the general education budgets are loud. Many of the posts and public letters are simply devoid of fact, and lack consideration for our contracted obligations. In fact, these calls to action may bring about the exact opposite of their intended result. If our town boards are called back to the table to redesign the 2020-21 budgets that were set over the winter, how much should we set aside for increased health insurance costs? How much does it cost to run a social-distanced school if classroom sizes must be halved and class offerings must be doubled?

If we really feel that drastic times call for drastic actions, so be it. Maybe the BOS can start tonight if that's our collective take, and perhaps the time has come to means-test the senior tax credit. If we're going to share the sacrifice, we need to do so in equal measure. The kids have already started.

Name

John Reilly

Email

jreilly18@yahoo.com

Address

6 Drummer Lane
Redding, CT 06896
United States

[Map It](#)

From:  Budget 2021
Jonathan Hopkins <j5acoustics@gmail.com> Tue, May 5, 2020 12:00:20 PM 

Subject: Fwd: budget 2021 comment

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  **Zachary Smith**

I am writing to encourage the members of the board to come together and unanimously pass a budget with no tax increase as our neighbors in Newtown, Ridgefield, and Wilton also appear likely to do. Local government and services will be more important than ever in the times ahead. Students will be requiring additional help to break the achievement gap. Social distancing rules may apply in classrooms. Town services may be utilized more frequently with residents spending more time physically in Redding. Placing further ideological cuts on the backs of our students and town employees is not evidence based or prudent when compared to our neighbors or in a time with increased interest in real estate in our area.

thank you,

Jonathan Hopkins
Little Boston Lane

From:  Budget 2021
"Jeff Fligelman" <jeff@gothamwriters.com> Tuesday, May 5, 2020 12:05:07 PM 

Subject: Fwd: Letter from 130 Redding Residents

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  **Zachary Smith**

To: Redding Board of Finance
From: 130 Redding Residents
Re: For Passage of Proposed Town and School Budgets
Date: May 5, 2020

Please see the letter below signed by 130 Redding residents in favor of passage of the proposed budgets.

Dear Members of the Redding Board of Finance,

We face a very difficult time and very real hardships. We all have friends and neighbors who have been affected by COVID-19, either directly or indirectly. People are sick and dying, people have lost jobs, and our children haven't been to school in weeks.

And through it all, we remain optimistic. Our town has overcome challenges for over 250 years. We are a diverse community, and that diversity will help us weather this storm. The damage caused by the coronavirus is real, but we are confident that together we will overcome it. The question we face is what is Redding going to look like when we get to the other side.

We are especially concerned about our children. The educational careers of 1,500 kids have already been severely impacted. They have stayed home, away from their studies, away from their friends, away from their childhoods, to help protect our community. Yet some are calling for cuts to the funds that support their education. However, you only get one chance at Kindergarten, or third grade, or being prepared for high school, and next year all of our children will be starting at a deficit. Larger class sizes, fewer support staff, and less programming would only make a difficult situation even worse.

As members of the Board of Finance, you likely know that the only way to guarantee losing money in the market is to sell at the low point. That's how you lock in a loss. The same is true for the education of our children. By cutting now, you would ensure that what should be a temporary educational setback becomes an ongoing deficit. Please don't allow fear to cause you to sell when things are difficult. You have prudently addressed our town's cash flow concerns, and as was explained by our town's tax collector, we will be made whole by the end of our fiscal year.

Understanding that all of our boards have scoured their budgets for savings, we ask that you pass those budgets as presented to you. If you want to make changes to the budgets, we believe that those changes should be supported unanimously by the Board of Finance and by the other board in question. For instance, if the BOF wants to cut the Selectman's budget, then all of the BOF members should agree with the cut, and all of the Selectmen should agree as well. We need consensus, not a fractured leadership. Put differently, we believe that having a bare majority of the BOF overrule another elected board and then go ahead and ratify that budget without a town-wide vote would damage public trust in our local government.

Redding has always been a community that comes together and supports one another, and together we are going to get through this difficult time.

Thank you for your service and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Margaret and William Brown
2336 Meadow Ridge

Nicole Steen
Erach Screwvala
35 Lamppost Drive

Katharine Dusenbury
19 Lamppost Drive

Chris Racette
76 Drummer Lane

Sarah Kelly
Liadan O'Connor
Lorcan O'Connor
144 Seventy Acre Road

Maisie and James Wallick
235 Redding Road

Amy Arnold
17 Werf Drive

Jonathan Hopkins
Heather Hopkins
16 Little Boston Lane

Keith and Marissa Rich
40 Putnam Park Road

Joanne and Reid Gray
Carolina Gray
Helen Lindauer
15 Lonetown Road

Brenda Phelps
Robert Mars
2 Indian Hill Road

Jen and Mike Lyons
22 Orchard Drive

Melinda Irwin
55 High Ridge Road

Jeff Fligelman
Kathryn Zimmerman
72 Pocahontas Road

Alex Zuluaga
29 Sunnyview Drive

Dan Burgess & Sarah O'Dell
214 Black Rock Turnpike

Todd and Andrea Trimble
8 Iris Lane

Chad and Leila Herrman
15 Orchard Drive

Michael Dobbins
Maureen Dobbins
30 Wood Road

Rudd and Tracy Anderson
6 Meeker Hill Road

Eric Baker & Jeanne Halloran
216 Black Rock Tpke

Brian Baker
Carolyn Baker
15 Indian Hill Road

Jacob and Amber Cedusky
105 Portland Ave

Alisa Masson
18 Packer Brook Road

Susan and Chris Runge
95 Peaceable Street

Kathleen & Joel Kaplan
41 Deacon Abbott Road

Sarah Goguen
49 Lamppost Drive

Rachel Sanderson
27 Umpawaug Road

Lisa Baran
Andy Baran
9 Dan Beard Lane

Darrell Bradford & Cindy Bradford
93 Cross Highway

Timothy Rappoccio
Rebecca Rappoccio
11 Deer Hill Road

Cathleen Gelman
Irwin Gelman MD

134 Umpawaug Road

Patrick and Meredith Schuchard
81 Pinetree Road

Malcolm & Vanessa McPherson
20 Rockledge Road

Leif Smith
70a Portland Avenue

Martine and Liam King
440 Rockhouse Road

Judy and Harvey Kagan
34 Dorethy Road

Lucy Tancredi & Edward Humphrey
8 Thankful Bradley Road

Faith Hsu
89 Seventy Acre Road

Daniel and Sophie Mond
66 Drummer Lane

Mary Bailey & Toby Welles
240 Poverty Hollow Road

John Reilly
Lisa Reilly
6 Drummer Lane

Michele and Andy Ames
12 Bridle Road

Ben Collins and Emily Corse
42 Ledgewood Road

Brett and Meghan Russo
33 High Ridge Road

Ilona and Mark Zimmer
48 Meeker Hill Road

Seana and Steven Bedard
16 Winding Brook Lane

Karen Benin
139 Limekiln Road

Frederick V. Miller III
98 Picketts Ridge Road

Magtanggol and Angela Caes
41 Deer Hill Road

Erin Tiernan and James Patts
4 Church Hill Lane

Frederick and Sharon Miller Jr
98 Picketts Ridge Road

Tyler and Jessica Nevins
59 Cross Hwy

Mark Lukas
26 Peaceable St.

Kate and Adam Schwartz
57 Giles Hill Road

Jacquelyn Fritch Dyar
William Dyar
60 High Ridge Road

Lisa Cederbaum
Rob Cederbaum
23 Pine Mountain Road

Trisha Sorrells Doyle
12 Church Hill Lane

James & Lauren Britton
29 Umpawaug Road

James Cunningham
Laura Cunningham
5 Gallows Hill Road extension

Kristin & Matt Bedoukian
12 Indian Hill Road

Catherine Riordan
56 Deer Hill Road

Christina Parrinello and Alexander Mir
42 Pine Mountain Road

Annie Evans and Martin Robinson
77 Topstone Road

Riye E Aoki
Perry M. Perretz
112 Portland Avenue

Donald and Jessica Zoz
143 Picketts Ridge Road

Robert Haffner
Aline Haffner
7 Whortleberry Road

Vanessa Alward
159 Cross Hwy

Lisa and Eric Goldstein
657 Redding Road

Nick & Colleen Kady
36 High Ridge Road

Orris Litz
72 Deer Hill Road

Chris and Betsy Wilkes
23 Blueberry Hill Road

ALL ADDRESSES ARE REDDING, CT.

From:  Budget 2021
Mike L <mikespub10@gmail.com>

Monday, May 4, 2020 7:35:51 PM



Subject: Fwd: Please support the BoE budget

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  Zachary Smith

Dear Board of Finance,

Please vote Yes and pass the budget submitted by the Board of Education. I am concerned for our children because our Special Education (SpEd) expenditures have been increasing, but the school budget has not increased commensurate with the SpEd costs. Redding has tried to balance delivery of mandated SpEd services without substantial increases to education expenditures, the result has been cuts to programs and services for *general education* students.

Increasing SpEd expenses are not the fault of the schools, administration, nor the children. Redding must educate and provide programs and services for *all* of our children regardless of individual circumstances. Please do not seek additional cuts to the BoE budget proposal. Recent budgets show cuts are borne by students *without special needs*. Please vote Yes for the school budget: Support our town, our schools, and our children.

In Partnership,

Mike Lyons

22 Orchard Drive

From:  Budget 2021 Mon, May 4, 2020 3:13:50 PM 
Peter A Bonfanti <peterb44@optonline.net>

Subject: Fwd: Redding's well funded schools may have organizational issues if unable to reduce ...

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  **Zachary Smith**

Dear Board of Finance Members,

The Redding schools (K-8) are projected to have 840 student in the upcoming school year. With a projected budget of \$22,573,396 this equated to almost \$27,000 per student. Class size in most grades are below 20. There are currently 8.4 students per certified staff. How any person can say we are depriving our student of a top quality education does not square with the facts. We are among the highest cost per student in Connecticut.

The Redding BOE wants even more money for an already excessive budget and seems reluctant to significantly reduce next years spending. A modest 5% reduction from this years budget is more than warranted.

If the BOE and School Administration can not accomplish these reasonable reductions we should really worry about the schools organizational effectiveness. This of course is a management issue that would need to be addressed.

From:  Budget 2021
"Chakravartty, Rahul" <rahul@mclawct.com>

Sat, May 2, 2020 2:22:31 PM



Subject: Fwd: 2020-2021 Proposed Budget comment

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  Zachary Smith

May 1, 2020

Dear Board of Finance:

Although the Covid-19 pandemic has, and will continue to stress the Town of Redding budget, it is imperative that the educational budget and social services budget not be reduced. Both the children of our community, and the senior residents are facing greater risk to their mental, psychological and social health than the middle aged and young adult residents. Furthermore, both the schools are the pillars of strength for our town. If we decrease their operating budgets, we weaken our community in a time of need.

The children of our town are experiencing a set back in their education and their development due to the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" executive order issued by Governor Lamont. They are missing out on crucial learning opportunities. On-line classes and assignments only mitigate the damage, but their educational progress has been diminished. When our children return to their schools, they deserve and need to have everything they had before the isolation period, and more. The children with special needs in particular will need support and assistance to readjust and make up for lost time. The high school students cannot afford to lose any programs and services because they will need to work even harder to be prepared for college. When the children return to normal classes it will be critical for them to have the full support and resources that the schools can offer. Cutting the education budget in anticipation of a long term economic downturn and hardship town tax payers may experience would be a mistake.

Likewise, the senior residents of our time are facing a very difficult time. Their isolation period will be longer than that of the rest of the population since they are more at risk for serious illness and death due to the pandemic. They need the support of the town's social services, and they will need the support of the Heritage Center once things go back to normal.

Nevertheless, the budget committee has to make tough choices. You need to take into consideration the potential burden that increased taxes will place on all residents, or even the burden of paying taxes at the current rate if the economy turns south. But, the real question to ask is why do people live in the Town of Redding? What makes us a community that attracts new families, what makes us special?, What gives us the strength to pull through this difficult time and the possible hardship of an economic recession?

The schools and the activities the schools' offer our children, and the services and programs for seniors are the main supporting pillars of our community. There is no greater investment we can make than to continue to fund the educational system and social services in this town at full capacity in order to navigate our way through this extremely difficult time.

The prospect of raising taxes in a potential economic recession is daunting and precarious. Nevertheless, I would ask that such an option be considered over making any cuts. If we do indeed have a serious economic downturn, the community is going to have to rely on the schools and the Community Center as their main source of social life. When money gets tight we cut back on material comforts, we cut back on vacations, we cut back on eating out and spending money on

recreational activities. So what do families and individuals then do? They make use of public services and opportunities. They become more involved in the public education system and their children's extracurricular school activities. They take advantage of town sponsored programs at Park and Rec and the Heritage Center. In hard times people need to have community support and draw strength from their neighbors and friends. The pillars of our community are the schools, community center, and senior center. We need to strengthen them in this difficult time, not reduce their budgets and diminish their role in our community.

In this difficult time the middle aged and young adults can make sacrifices; we can pay more in taxes, we can manage. The children and seniors are the ones who will be hardest hit. We need to support them. My business is struggling, I have had to lay off people (hopefully temporarily), reduce my own salary to part time and still work full time. I have had to get a forbearance on my mortgage and other loans. But I will survive, I will cut back and tighten my belt. I am willing to pay more taxes to keep this community strong.

We moved to Redding because of the schools and the strong vibrant senior community and the cultural wealth they possess and share with us all. The culture in Redding is different from the rest of Fairfield County. I have lived in Fairfield County my whole life- I have seen how both Westport and Fairfield changed over time for the worse with over-development, and educational budget cuts forced by newer residents who were more concerned about their taxes than the true value of a small town community. I have seen the older generation move away because the towns changed and the quality of their social lives diminished. The other towns in southern Fairfield County have become cookie-cutter "suburbs" and lost their personality. Please do not cut the budgets for the schools, community, and senior programs- they are what make this town great, and they are what will give us the support and strength we need to get through this difficult time.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my comments.

Rahul Chakravartty

7 Dahlia Lane

From:  Budget 2021
ANgelica Fontanez <angelicafontanez@gmail.com>

Mon, May 4, 2020 5:21:58 PM



Subject: Fwd(2): Send this article to the board

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  Zachary Smith

Rahul Chakravartty
7 Dahlia Lane

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Rahul Chakravartty** <rahulchakravartty@hotmail.com>
Date: Mon, May 4, 2020 at 4:57 PM
Subject: Re: Send this article to the board
To: ANgelica Fontanez <angelicafontanez@gmail.com>

as supporting evidence of my comments please:

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/04/us/coronavirus-education-online-school-slide-wellness/index.html>

From:  Budget 2021
Reid Gray <jreidgray@gmail.com> Thursday, April 30, 2020 2:41:20 PM

Subject: Fwd: Budget Vote

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  **Zachary Smith**



Dear Board of Finance,

Having attended several Board of Education budget meetings, we are aware that a great deal of thought and diligence have gone into the preparation of this budget, including significant cuts to education programs, and we believe that no further cuts are possible without harming our schools. Given that there will be no voter referendum on this budget, it is imperative to the public trust that a bare majority of the Board of Finance not overrule another elected board whose efforts at finding savings have been exemplary. While we recognize that COVID-19 has introduced uncertainties at least in the near term, we believe that this is precisely the time when we must be vigilant not to shortchange our children. It is not incidental that property values in our town are closely tied to the value of our educational system, and to the extent that town residents are economically distressed by the impact of the virus, maintaining their property values is that much more critical at this time--for many residents, property value is their most substantial asset. We encourage you to vote, on the public's behalf in lieu of a referendum, for the budget passed by the Board of Education.

Sincerely,

Reid and Joanne Gray

15 Lonetown Road

Redding, CT 06896

From:  Budget 2021
"ramorton@optonline.net" <ramorton@optonline.net>

Tue, May 5, 2020 6:38:36 AM



Subject: Fwd: Budget reductions

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  **Zachary Smith**

My wife and I want to register our strong beliefs that the town budget, including all education budgets, should be reduced at least 10% across the board, nothing excluded.

The economic conditions at present are not going to improve at any time in the near future, and that looks like well into 2021, so present spending is unsustainable without an increase in town taxes, which are already too high for many fixed-income dwellers, and a detriment to home sales.

We also support an increase in the proposed bond lending from \$5 to \$10 million to provide an adequate draw to cover expenses when interest rates are low.

We understand the value of maintaining the excellent school system that we have supported for 50 years, since 1970, when we moved to Redding; our own children benefitted from this system and we have long agreed to improvements and new expenditures to improve the system, but these are different and difficult times not faced before. Reductions must now be made or the whole structure could fail as the town and all its other services sink into debt or disfunction.

Now is the time for severe reductions in spending.

Robert and Marjorie Morton

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274 Poverty Hollow Road
Redding Ridge, CT 06876
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Cell: 203 470-4454
[email:ramorton@optonline.net](mailto:ramorton@optonline.net)

From:  Budget 2021
Robert Davino <robert.j.davino@gmail.com> Monday, May 4, 2020 9:08:25 AM 

Subject: Fwd: Budget Considerations

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  Zachary Smith

I appreciate and laud the efforts of BoF, especially in these challenging times. My respectful position is to ask you not to approve this budget.

I reviewed the documents which, while challenging, has led me to the following questions and recommendations for consideration.

- It appears that Redding Gov't people costs (S&W, P/T, O/T) are proposed to increase at almost double the rate of the overall budget 3.0% vs. 1.6%. If these costs are held flat and modestly trimmed vs.the current year budget it would bring the entire budget increase to 0%.

- As an observation, the Heritage Center budget has grown 18% since 2019. Is such a rate of increase warranted and sustainable in these times?

- I am a big fan of our schools however there is a line item in the Redding BoE budget called "Tuition Private Schools" which has grown from \$118k in 2018 to \$740k, a 527% increase. Additionally this line item alone represents 26% of the entire proposed budget increase. Can someone clarify for me what this is and if it directly benefits our schools or are we funding to send our towns children to private schools outside our system?

- Lastly, I would like to make a recommendation that each budget group submit a 1-page narrative, along with the detailed budgets currently available, that articulates, summarizes and supports their spending recommendation. I think we would also benefit from seeing comparatives vs. Actual/Forecasted spending as opposed previous years Budget. I think the townspeople would be most appreciative.

Thank you again for your service to our community.
Respectfully,
Robert Davino
Tunxis Trail

Sent from my iPad

From:  Budget 2021
"Gagnon Personal" <sgagnoncpa@gmail.com>

Fri, May 1, 2020 10:16:13 PM



Subject: Fwd: BoF Budget Comments

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  Zachary Smith

As we near unemployment levels of 18%, as others are being forced to take 10-50% pay cuts, I do not see how any single budget cannot be reduced by at least 10%. I have read and listened to emphatic comments from residents discuss the impact a reduction would have on the children. I have listened to a resident state that we "can't make our kids sacrifice anymore". Well, the truth is while the kids are missing out on fun activities like play dates or proms, their parents and others in the community will be faced with losing their homes. Or choosing between putting a hot meal on the table or going to the doctor. I am sorry, but there is no comparison.

These people will be forced to leave their homes. They will be forced to leave behind their friends if you do not act immediately. If you asked the school child if they preferred to go on a play date that would last a few hours or losing their home and best friends, what do you think they would choose?

A topic that never comes up is the pending default rate. Even if there is a zero percent increase to the budget, experts are estimating a 10% default rate on tax collections in 2020-2021. In Redding, that equates to nearly a \$5,000,000 revenue shortfall from the current budget, even without any increases. With 3,800 homes in town, that results in an average increase in household tax burden of over \$1,300. The average real estate tax paid per home is approximately \$13,700 (based on the 2020 CERC statements). This will be a tax increase of 10% in annual taxes!

Per the Redding Town Plan, 29.8% of Redding residents had an income of \$50,000 or less. 10.7% of the residents had income of less than \$20,000. The increase alone to these residents will be as high as 15% of their TOTAL income.

This is sadly, unacceptable. Please, for the sake of all the residents and families of Redding, require a significant reduction in all the budgets.

Thanks,

Steve

From:  Budget 2021
Susan Winters <swdesigner@me.com>

Tuesday, May 5, 2020 3:26:31 AM



Subject: Fwd: Reduce the Budget

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  **Zachary Smith**

To: the Board of Finance
From: Susan Winters, Seventy Acre Road, Redding

This is the editorial I wrote for today's hello, Redding. I am submitting it as my opinion on the upcoming budget. Thank you for all of your hard work on our behalf

Wake up and smell the crisis

Reduce the budget and lower the mil rate

These are unprecedented times. To think we are going to emerge into a world that looks like the one we had just last February is unrealistic.

It's a given that Redding will suffer with cash flow based on Governor Lamont's Executive Order allowing a deferment of property taxes,. Even the TAN (Tax Anticipation Note) discussed at a recent Board of Finance Meeting will not make up the difference if unemployed citizens cannot make their payments after the grace date.

Not everyone will be going back to work once the precautions are lifted. Many companies will not reopen and even if we don't see the astonishing 30% unemployment that we are experiencing now, people will not have the income that they had before. Housing prices will continue to drop and they won't be able to sell... putting them between a rock and a hard place.

In the middle of this, we have a Board of Education that gives lip service to understanding the crisis.

The budget they propose is just not sustainable.

Yes, we all want the best for Redding's children. But, at what cost? Little Johnny may be sad if he can't go to an after school club or have push in Spanish but he would be even sadder if his best friend is no longer in school because his parents lost their jobs and then their home... or lost a parent because of coronavirus. Johnny will feel even worse if it is his own home that is lost.

The Board of Finance has been asking the Board of Ed to restructure its budget from the ground up for years. Now we are at a crisis and the normal nibbling at the edges of the budget and the threatening of losing treasured programs like Project Adventure just isn't going to do it.

Suggestions that could have brought in income like renting the 5th grade wing or taking in students from outside the district were ignored.

We have one of the highest costs per student in the state. I'm really tired of hearing that this is not a good comparison. Well then, what is? We have HALF the students of what we had just a few years ago. But, the budget just goes up and up. I'm also tired of hearing that there are state mandates and fixed costs... well all the other school districts have those too.

The Board of Ed has been asked to think out of the box but no good or creative suggestion has come from that entity.

At the last BoE meeting, I was discouraged to hear once again that the Redding Board of Ed thinks it's only job is to advocate for the children. Yes, it's the job of the Superintendent to put forth what they want for the schools and students. But, the board of Education has a fiduciary responsibility to the

taxpayer, ensuring the school administration uses taxpayers funds economically. They represent the entire town, and not just the people who voted for them. The Board does not have carte blanche to do what they want and not care how much it costs.

After that meeting, I had a conversation with a person who is moved to town a little over the year ago. He told me that he was astounded to witness the adversarial nature of the Board of Ed in Redding. He said they spoke of the Board of Finance with disdain and he sensed an "us vs them" attitude. One that was not returned with most of the Board of Finance who understand that they are the stewards of the town's finances. He told me, "Listening to the last board meeting you would believe you've tuned into a PTA meeting not an independent board. There was no skepticism, push back or give and take between the Board and the Superintendent. Lots of gnashing of teeth on how to cut as little as possible to placate the BoF and taxpayer."

As Board of Finance member Ward Mazzucco said recently, "We have to live within a budget and the only way we can address the strain that our taxpayers will feel next year is to reduce spending. The school population started to drop in 2008 and it was another 5-6 years before any real cuts were made."

Mazzucco added, "Shame on us that that we didn't react more quickly to the declining enrollment, but we didn't. And when we finally did we didn't make any appreciable cuts and frankly, it's about time in the middle of the worst crisis that we can have short of a nuclear war."

The Board of Finance asked the Redding Board of Education to consider reducing their budget 5-10%. The BoE decided to interpret the request as if it was a suggestion and they decided that they considered it and rejected the idea. They were not listening to the discussion and understanding that the BoF was using polite terminology and that they were really mandating that their budget needed to be cut by at least 5%. They also decided that if their budget plus the other two budgets brought the total down to flat, that would be ok.

Haven't they learned the lessons of the past few years? Especially two years ago when the budget was rejected twice? These are dire times and this is not a game, although the school board apparently thinks its a game of semantics.

Simply, we can not afford the budget the way it stands. Not just going forward but now.

Ideas have been floated but they are summarily dismissed without due diligence. Just saying, "Oh we can't do that" without reasons.

Here are some ideas that have been suggested:

A hiring freeze across all budgets. We did fine without a Data Analyst, we don't need one now.

One principal for both lower schools and an assistant principal in each. We had two principals when the school population was double of what it is now. One should work for a few years until the population starts to grow.

One assistant principal in the high school for the same reason as above... yes, I know its the Reg 9 Board of Ed and they are their own Board of Finance but the budgets all need to be cut.

The teacher contracts should be renegotiated. No pay raises for the next two years, at least.

If we are paying for a teachers or administrators further education like a masters or doctorate, they should be required to stay on and work for several years or pay back the cost of their education.

There should be no raises at all across all budgets for anyone making over \$75,000. That includes the Central Office, where I think anyone making over \$200,000 should take a salary cut. (Anyone in town making that salary should also take a cut)

Bring in students from out of the district and charge full cost per student tuition. That includes foreign exchange.

Ask parents to run clubs or supervise the school play, saving the stipend that would go to teachers.

Not all of these will work, but deserve proper exploration before being dismissed.

Some parents are saying that they want the budget increased in spite of the dire circumstances we all face. I suggest they should take the money they would spend on a tax increase and donate it to the schools.

What happened to the replacement for the Redding Education Foundation? It was a great fundraising tool that gave grants to the schools. Easton has the ELF: Easton Learning Foundation that would be a great model.

Why isn't the PTA doing fundraising?

There is too much complaining and not enough action. Make something happen. Be creative.

The seniors and empty nesters in town are frustrated and tired of hearing that budget cuts are all taken "on the backs of the children." We all want great schools but we have to be able to afford them. What about the "backs of the

seniors” and those on limited income? Should they not have enough for heating oil because some parent wants their kid to have Spanish for 15 minutes a few times a week?

There are some who are concerned that property values will decrease if we don't give more to our schools. High taxes will scare away prospective buyers even before they look at our schools.

I was appalled that a parent at the (virtual) BoF meeting actually said that because Social Security checks weren't affected (yet) the seniors should be ok paying an increase in taxes. Sorry, they are busy buying food and heating their homes and can't afford to get your child a new Chromebook while the one they are using is still working.

Besides the school budget, I also think that we need to establish another business center in Redding. It's clear that Gilbert & Bennett is way down the road. There has to be a parcel that can be rezoned for business somewhere in town. Preferable to be kept for small or local business and not large chains. Something to bring in more income.

The crisis isn't over. We are in the very early stages of rebuilding the economy and it will take awhile to find our new normal. That is, until the next wave hits.

The time to be fiscally conservative is here and it hit like a ton of bricks. Doesn't matter if you are Democrat or Republican, if you have kids in school or not. It's time to tighten our belts, sharpen our pencils and work together.

Cut the budgets. Reduce the mil rate.

From:  Budget 2021
"TR DAVIS" <trdavis42@optonline.net>

Monday, May 4, 2020 1:47:57 PM



Subject: Fwd: BOF budget 2021

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  **Zachary Smith**

To all BOF members,

I have been a resident for over 21 years now and have seen it all. The good, the bad and the ugly. I would love to give a long diatribe about the current conditions of this town but I will instead keep it brief and to the point.

-Simple equation: **good education=decent or good housing valuation**. Even throwing out the financial collapse in 2008 this methodology and footprint has not even remotely held true to form in Redding.

-**Higher budgets are not the solution**. No one will purchase a home in this town because the taxes are too high. No one can sell a home in this town because the taxes are too high. **Self-defeating prophecy**. If you disagree please put your home on the market for your assessed value.

-**Look at the future, not the current**. After the pandemic has subsided there will be massive economic and employment ramifications. They will not be positive, trust me.

-During these historic times everyone must do their part and sacrifice to some degree.

-**Raising the budget at this stage is not practical and should actually be reduced.**

“A good compromise is when both parties are dissatisfied” Henry Clay

From:  Budget 2021
Optonline <mhvond2@optonline.net>

Tuesday, May 5, 2020 8:24:12 AM



Subject: Fwd: Cut school admin costs

To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  **Zachary Smith**

Please - reduce school administrative costs. Region 9 and at the individual Redding School level.

I fully agree with this written statement:

We have one of the highest costs per student in the state. I'm really tired of hearing that this is not a good comparison. Well then, what is? We have HALF the students of what we had just a few years ago. But, the budget just goes up and up. I'm also tired of hearing that there are state mandates and fixed costs... well all the other school districts have those too.

von Dwingelo
9 Guardhouse Dr
Redding

Less government = More freedom