

From:  Budget 2021
Alli Scheckner <allison.scheckner@gmail.com>

Tue, May 5, 2020 2:23:38 PM



Subject: Fwd: Budget meeting

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

May 5, 2020

We are in favor of passage of the proposed budgets and also wanted to add our names to this letter.

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,

Allison and Jason Scheckner

[212 Redding Road](#)

[Redding CT 06996](#)

Sent from my iPhone

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

5/7/2020 10:26:04 AM



Subject: Fwd: Proposed Budget- BOE- 2020-2021

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

April 29, 2020

Dear Board of Finance,

I am writing to share with you, during these extremely difficult times where any budget decision can not be taken lightly, my personal experience of my children after Fairfield significantly cut its school budget. I hope that my story demonstrates how important it is to keep valuable resources which impact the overall quality education that a child can receive, and lead a student to thrive and be successful.

Although now a Redding resident, my 20 year old son, 13 year old daughter, and kindergarten- aged son previously lived in Fairfield, a town known for its great school district. I will explain how simple budget cuts impacted many families and students negatively, and my daughter in particular. As our neighborhood public school was becoming overcrowded, I started to notice the quality of the education to decline. In 2012, her Kindergarten year, a new class was created in October to keep the classroom numbers low. With a December birthday, my daughter did struggle (despite strong pre-school), but with small classes and summer interventions, she was managing and seemed "caught up" in third through sixth grades.

When we moved to Redding in the middle of her 7th grade (2018), we all decided that she will stay in Fairfield (Her father has residence there) til 8th grade and then go to Barlow for high school. Please pay close attention to how when staff is expected to work on a tight budget and limited resources of how it has a very negative impact on a struggling student.

That year, Fairfield had adopted a new grading system, so that your 1st marking period final grade (i.e. a "D") would automatically carry over to the next marking period. While the logic behind that thought was an A student will carry an A throughout and not have to start from scratch, that decision backfired not just with my daughter, but with most non-A students. At the end of 1st marking period, my daughter's grades had plummeted to a D in Math and her grades were dropping across the board. (This was a time of great stress for our family due to care for my dying mother and passed away that year, and our anticipated move to Redding). Throughout that year, I sent regular emails to her teachers about my concerns. I would get a friendly response back saying "your daughter simply needs to do her work and she will be fine", in other words, brief acknowledgements, but no help. Because her state assessment exams were not strong in reading, she received some vague support in reading for a few weeks, but nothing for math

since she had a borderline score.

At the end of the second semester of 7th grade, the grades remained low. At that time (and still today), I absolutely could not afford \$75-100 an hour a week for a tutor. Feeling at a loss, I emailed the principal for any suggestions but I never received a reply.

Then my daughter missed an overall 2 weeks from school due to strep, she suffered a complete set back again with no proper support in place. Her math teacher was getting frustrated with my attempts to get help and basically told me "She has to find it in her so she can be successful". I still don't know any 12 years old that has adult maturity. After several requests, I had a face to face meeting with the guidance counselor. He told me - oh your daughter keeps coming up as a concern each month, but then she is not failing yet and her assessments are not great but not low enough for special education so there isn't much we can do for her except maybe encourage her to do her homework more consistently. If she continues to fail, then we can explore interventions. **At that moment, I realized staff were extremely overwhelmed with the current budget cuts and the cuts of "non-essential resources"**. This was not the same school I had previously known. A team of teachers and staff had been regularly talking about my daughter on a monthly basis and no one bothered or cared to reach out to me. My oldest son attended the same middle school and his experience was very different from my daughter. While the circumstances were different, it was always easy to get support when needed because the school had plenty of resources available.

My daughter is not the type of kid who is going to raise her hand and say "hey look at me I need help", and I was happy that the guidance teacher agreed to talk to her teachers about my concerns so maybe we should see progress. To no avail, the teacher seemed overwhelmed with work, and despite my concerns never, scheduled my daughter for a make-up test, resulting in a "0". It turns out that communications between guidance and teacher were dictated by team meetings which were held every so often (in her case 2 weeks after the 0).

It was not an easy decision to take my daughter out of her school and have her start fresh in 8th grade somewhere new. I would like to say Dr. McMorran and Joy, the guidance counselor, patiently worked with me and my daughter and were quite encouraging. Before we withdrew her, we met with the assistant principal, he said - oh yes your daughter has come up on our monthly meeting and it seems guidance reached out to you. **I had to correct him that I reached out to guidance and the teachers multiple times.** He never did meet my daughter even though she kept coming up in their monthly meeting.

So her experience at **John Read** middle school has been a day and night difference. Please do not get me

wrong, she still makes me work very hard in trying to give support. Elessa was given both **Reading and Math support right from the start**. Her math specialist was surprised by the large gap that she had, but said **“once I am able to break it down for her then she gets it”**. This meant that she just needed targeted extra help and not special education services. In a few months, with her hard work together with Mr. Ball's expertise, her reading showed great improvement so she no longer needs the extra help. A “D” math student in Fairfield, her grades (with help) at John Read have been a 76, 85, and 83. **This is a student who without the extra help would have had to get special education services to help her catch up to speed which would have been more costly intervention versus having access to the extra help. And she would have had the additional trauma of feeling terrible about herself. Plus, the teachers have been wonderful and responsive with any of my concerns and questions.**

Lastly, the reading and the writing program even at the elementary school level is very strong compared to my experience at Fairfield school system. We were very pleased at RES that the teacher gave my son a book on a daily basis which meant appropriate tracking which was not done in Fairfield . Plus , most families would not even know what books to give their children, especially **families with limited resources**. I can tell my youngest son he already has an advantage with his writing ability due to the attention that has been given to him by his teacher. He complained to me “ she is strict and makes me write”. When I saw his writing project via google classroom, I told him your teacher is a wonderful teacher who sees your potential and knows how to push you to your full ability and is taking the time to do so (**small classroom allows for this**).. My oldest son still needs to build his writing skills since he had a very weak foundation in that area despite being a student at an excellent school district.

I know Fairfield had cuts these past few years and they will say it won't impact the education that the children will receive since we are only cutting what appears to be “non-essential” cuts. However, **these cuts seem to have a domino effect that impacts the teachers and guidance counselors ability to holistically be there for a student.**

The heart of the matter is when these budget cuts take place, the families with resources and wealth, will find a way to supplement, hire tutors, or send their kids to private school(there has been data in both Fairfield and Westport about this). The students who are overachievers will always excel no matter what. However, the families with limited resources or the students who need that extra encouragement from the school staff are the ones who suffer. It is a great gift to give any striving student the opportunity to thrive.

Finally, we really need to take into consideration the extra cost and effort that will take to transition the students back into school after this pandemic. I am personally seeing it with my own children and we are a family that is providing as much emotional support as possible. There is state data that shows a high increase in domestic violence and child abuse. Children who come from these kind of family scenarios with limited support in the

home, normally find refuge in their school. The initial reaction of let's cut the budget due to the pandemic's aftermath may appear on the surface as a responsible response . Yet, we have to be mindful of how a community as a whole heals and shows resilience after these psychological losses and the support that will be needed to sustain a healthy community.

Thank You,

Angelica Fontanez

7 Dahlia Lane Redding, CT

(Town Social Worker)

From:  Budget 2021
Claudio Rodrigo <carodrigo56@gmail.com>

Fri, May 8, 2020 4:13:37 PM



Subject: Fwd: Reduce the Board of Education Budget

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

Dear Members of the Board of Finance,

I want to urge the Board to not accept the proposed budget by the BoE. We are in unprecedented times and the currently proposed budget ignores this reality. With record unemployment and the expected decline in Property Tax revenues, the town will face significant financial hardship. The time is now to tighten the belt and reduce spending.

A 5% reduction in spending is completely reasonable and would force constructive positive change to the way the school system operates today. Without such a mandate the BoE will continue to spend with no fiduciary responsibilities. The quality of our Education System will be stronger for it and much more efficient than today.

Sincerely

Claudio & Joyce Rodrigo
Umpawaug Rd

From:  Budget 2021
Comelia Hurwitz <cajoa@optonline.net>

Tuesday, May 5, 2020 4:37:11 PM



Subject: Fwd: budget 2021

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

Dear Board of Finance Members,
It is time to finally realize that the town of Redding cannot sustain the enormous burden of unreasonable yearly budget increases while school enrollments decrease. It is time to cut the school budget.
Please do not be pushed by the Board of Education to maintain. It is time to cut. It is past time to act.
Sincerely,
Cornelia Hurwitz
2 Bald Rock Rd
Redding

From:  Budget 2021
Erin Tieman <tiemanerin@hotmail.com>

Wednesday, May 6, 2020 1:04:49 PM



Subject: Fwd: Budget Concerns

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

Hello - My husband and I attended the BOF zoom meeting last night. We are so disappointed that the budget was not passed. This budget does not have room for cuts in mainstream education. As I read it now, my daughter (an incoming 3rd grader) will already be faced with a larger class size in the fall and I'm sure this will adversely impact her education. This class as a whole has many behavior challenges and I'm sure packing more of them into a classroom, especially after not being in a classroom for 6 months, is going to produce disastrous results. I completely agree that something needs to be done to manage the spending on SPED in Redding, but it should not be done on the backs of mainstream education.

I am so disheartened by the state of education in Redding. We purchased our house in Redding 9 years ago and finding a community with good schools and smaller class sizes was critical in our decision making process. We both attended schools with small class sizes and wanted the same for our kids. From what we are seeing, it seems as though our rankings have continued to decline and our schools have been forced to do more with less resources every year. I am a working parent, I volunteer often and chair a number of PTA fundraisers at the elementary school. These fundraisers have been critical to supporting "extras" for our kids at the school. Our PTA has funding things like after school clubs, new gym equipment, books for the library, activities to do on days when the kids cannot be outside, teacher grants and many other "extra" benefits for the students. As parents, we can continue to help to fill the gaps for "extras" but PTAs are not designed to fund mainstream education. My husband and I, along with many other families our doing our part. Our town and the BOF needs to do their part and support our schools. The BOF cannot ask for any further cuts.

Thank you for taking these concerns into consideration in you decision making process.

Erin Tiernan
James Patts
4 Church Hill Ln

From:  Budget 2021
Henry POLIO <hankp@optonline.net>

Tuesday, May 5, 2020 5:22:48 PM



Subject: Fwd: 2021 Budget Recommendation Support

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

Henry and Christine Polio

27 Gallows Hill Road

Dear BOF members,

As a result of the expected recession, both Christine and I fully support the 2021 budget recommendations made by the Committee to Sustain Redding's Future. We believe their recommendations are fair and the least painful way of dealing with the expected recession.

- There should be zero salary increases in the coming year unless mandated by contract.
- Salary freezes/cuts should be considered for negotiation in the coming year.
- No discretionary spending should be permitted.
- The Board of Finance should work with the town government and the school boards to achieve a 5-10% reduction in the overall Redding budget for the coming year.
- Given the high degree of uncertainty as to how deep the recession will be, and how long it will last, the Board of Finance should as a matter of prudence raise \$5 - 10 million in the bond market to build up our reserves for a potentially very long haul.

Best Regards,

Henry J. Polio

From:  Budget 2021
Jill Edelman Barberie <jilledelman@gmail.com>

Sun, May 10, 2020 5:30:10 PM



Subject: Fwd: Pass the budget please

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

Dear Dr Yonkers,

Please pass the proposed budget.

Thank you,

Jill Edelman Barberie

--

JILL EDELMAN, M.S.W., L.C.S.W.

9 Shady Lane

Redding, Ct. 06896

office: 203-984-1517

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From:  Budget 2021
Harvey Kagan <hjkagan@optonline.net>

Sunday, May 10, 2020 3:11:53 PM



Subject: Fwd: K-8 School Board Budget

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

We write to add our names to those in support of the K-8 School Budget as proposed by the Redding Board of Finance in their annual Budget. After 50 years in Redding & 2 children that have come through the marvelous school system, we are convinced that education is the most important thing we can give our children.

Thank you for your consideration.

Judy & Harvey Kagan

34 Dorethy Rd.

Redding, CT 06896

Sent from my iPad

From:  Budget 2021
Kevin Murray <kmurray@kmurrayassociates.com>

Tue, May 5, 2020 3:45:08 PM



Subject: Fwd: Tonight's meeting

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

I would like to ask the members of the Board of Finance the following question. If not this current economic disaster situation, then what other economic scenario would consider a decrease in spending? The economic ripple effects of the Covid 19 pandemic will be felt for an extended period of time, even here in our town of Redding. You do not know how much tax revenue you will receive in July, and suffice it to say it will be lower. People have been furloughed, or just plain let go, and as you are aware, mortgage and health insurance companies are allowing forbearances, which are useless as they both want all of the monies back in a lump sum on the 91st day. Absurd, but there it is.

Please consider reducing the budget to ease the burden on Redding taxpayers.

Respectfully,

Kevin Murray

--

Yours,

Kevin Murray & Associates, Inc.
Bringing ease, confidence & stability to your long term planning
Group Health, Level Funding, Long Term Care
14 Parsons Lane
Redding, CT 06896
203-243-4277

From:  Budget 2021
Lenore Pranzo <lcpranzo@hotmail.com>

Sunday, May 10, 2020 3:07:04 PM



Subject: Fwd: Pass the BOE budget

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

I am writing again to ask that you pass the board of education budget.

All of the unknowns with what gaps in learning there will be in the fall are reason enough.

Regards,
Lenore Pranzo
781 North Park Avenue

From:  Budget 2021
Boudiette Raymond <rayboudiette@icloud.com>

Tue, May 5, 2020 3:53:30 PM



Subject: Fwd: Boff special meeting

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

I would like to add some opinions on the recent budget discussions and Board of Education proposal.

The Board of Ed should be more creative at looking at cost reductions given the current situation. The problem is that the governments and municipalities don't look at their operations like a private company would. Very company in America is looking at cost reductions and taking actions to mitigate the impact of Covid-19. But not the municipalities. They continue to spend people's money as if it will continue to flow in.

Susan Winter's editorial in Today's hello Redding has a number of good and valid points, and should be mandatory reading for the Board! These are not normal times. And they won't be for quite some time. Higher or flat taxes are a joke! Nobody, or very few people, will be getting a pay increase over the next year. A number, like myself, will get a pay cut from their employer.

And I am also appalled that someone would suggest those on Social Security should use their SS income or property tax credits to fund the increase in taxes. Sounds very progressive - always looking to spend someone else's money instead of looking at how to make things more efficient!

Cut the budgets! And reduce the mil rate!

Ray Boudiette
90 Seventy Acre Road
Redding

From:  Budget 2021
Kristen Anstett <kristenanstett@msn.com> Tuesday, May 5, 2020 3:48:15 PM 

Subject: Fwd: 2021 Budget

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

Dear Members of the Redding Board of Finance,

We are writing today in support of the budget that was proposed by the Redding Board of Education and ask you to please pass the budget without any additional cuts.

Our family moved to Redding almost four years ago when our children were 3yrs and 6yrs old. The school system, and programs that were offered (especially the Gifted and Talented), was the driving force behind our move. In the almost four years that we have been here we have seen programs cut and class sizes increase. Our son was directly impacted this year when his 4th grade class was increase to 24 students. The changes that have been made, due to budget cuts over the last 3 years, have been a disappointment and one that has made us question our decision.

We do not believe that the youngest members of our community should be the ones to carry the burden that a drastic cut in the budget would cause. Children will hopefully be returning to school in the fall but will already be behind. Cutting support staff, increasing class sizes and reduced services will only make it more difficult for children to catch up.

We understand the fear that many residents have with these uncertain times. Our family has been directly impacted due to the pandemic but fear can not be a driving force while making decisions.

We know that this is a difficult decision but we implore you to not make any additional cuts to the budget.

Thank you for your time,

Richard and Kristen Anstett
60 Whortleberry Road
Redding, CT

From:  Budget 2021
"Tompkins, Richard {PBC}" <Richard.Tompkins@pepsi∞.∞∞>
Subject: Fwd: <no subject>
To:  **Steve Gniadek**  **Krista Gramer**  **Zachary Smith**

5/8/2020 5:43:33 PM



Dear Members of the Board of Finance,

It is unfortunate when a Governing Body, in this case our Board of Education, loses touch with the realities of their decision's impact on the lives of the citizens they are elected to serve here in Redding.

In what world, where we are dealing with Covid19's impact on our community in the form of unemployment due to quarantine, does this board of education believe a 3.48% increase to their budget is justified or explainable to the citizens of Redding?

Unfortunately it appears this board of education's decision to raise their budget yet again will negatively impact our tax bills this year without affording the town a voice in the process via our right to vote for or against it.

A 5% reduction in spending is completely reasonable and would force constructive positive change to the way the school system operates today by eliminating waste. Without such a mandate the BoE will continue to spend with no fiduciary responsibilities to the citizens of Redding. The quality of our Education System will be stronger for it and will operate much more efficiently than it does today.

The time is now to revisit this whole process and demand the board of education justify the budget they have put forth. I encourage you to send their budget back with a mandate of at least a 5% cut to prior year.

Richard Tompkins
Silversmith Lane

From:  Budget 2021
"Sarah O'Dell" <sarah.odell.burgess@gmail.com>

5/5/2020 3:34:41 PM



Subject: Fwd: Budget comments

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

To the BOF members.

Every year my family makes a donation to help fund classroom supplies in an underserved district. Usually they're schools in the inner city or in extreme rural areas. You've seen the news stories. I didn't realize that this year, by supporting the RES PTA, I'd also have an opportunity to help fund classroom supplies in an underserved district, since this year we had several "enrichment grant" requests for classroom "luxuries" like paper, paint and markers.

My husband was laid off on the day NYC basically shut down, and then, a month later, he had a stroke and had to take a helicopter ride to Yale to save his life. (Thanks to the quick response from our Redding paramedics, whose budget is also at risk, for him even having a life to save.) I would wager that my household budget is tighter than most. We are all struggling because this is an actual global disaster. But my kids - and the other kids in Redding - need this budget passed as it stands, with no cuts.

What about the kids, after what will be months of seclusion and loneliness; getting their socialization through a little screen; being deprived of hugs from cousins and grandparents; not being able to say goodbye to their teachers or friends; waiting alone while parents try and keep working (or look for work); missing all the milestones we remember from our own years at school; and some - like my own children - dealing with the extremely real trauma of watching a parent or loved one come close to death or worse, actually dying? These kids need a reasonable classroom size. I haven't even mentioned the academic toll - which any parent can tell you, is going to be enormous at every level and for every kid, no matter where they started out.

There's a reason we have public school - we've decided it's for the greater good of our community to have kids who can function in society as eventual adults. This is going to have an enormous impact on a generation of children, and cutting their budget and making glib comments about how parents should "step up" is not what this town needs right now. What we need right now is to fund the schools. Fund our emergency and social services. Do not make cuts to these lean budgets. Preserve our home values, sure, but also, preserve our neighbors from harm.

Sarah O'Dell
214 Black Rock Turnpike