

May 14, 2020

Waterford RTM
15 Rope Ferry Road
Waterford, CT 06385

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Robert L. Cooper
SCHOOL BOARD

Dear Representatives,

Though I am no longer a sitting member of this body myself, I have made a point to continue following your activities, which included listening in on your discussion this past Monday regarding the Board of Education's budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021. I am writing today to tell you that I believe you are making a grave mistake by cutting the \$470,000 that was discussed at your meeting on May 11th, and that furthermore your rationale for doing so appears to be non-existent, or at least very poorly explained from the public's point of view.

My understanding is that, in an effort to best accommodate those who have been financially impacted by the current health crisis, the Superintendent has already agreed to cut the amount of money to be spent on education (through the Capital Reserve fund) by \$400,000, and that this cut would, in fact, help allow a flat mill rate to be maintained. I understand a desire to maintain a flat mill rate - it is a measure that has been sought by most towns around the state, and I know that Waterford has also had to elect to participate in the Tax Deferment program and/or the Low Interest Rate program as outlined in the Governor's Executive Order 7S. These are very appropriate measures to take as a means of accommodating individuals who are currently under financial stress, and there are further actions being taken on the local, state, and federal level to make sure that folks have an ability to continue paying bills, keep a roof over their head, and put food on the table. A \$470,000 cut to the Board of Education of \$470,000 would save a family with a house assessed at \$200,000 a mere \$30 on their tax bills, or a mere \$0.08 per day for the coming year. This is not a significant savings to homeowners, but it may make a very significant difference to our community's children.

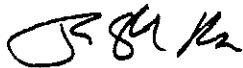
I'm very glad that the Superintendent was able to find \$400,000 worth of capital projects that he feels can be deferred a year - if these are the nebulous "inefficiencies" that I continuously heard some members of the RTM refer to at the May 11th meeting, however, I have bad news for you: the "inefficiency" was already found, and your further-proposed cut of \$470,000 will most assuredly result in the elimination of jobs. As if it is not enough to force our schools to have larger class populations, this fall and long thereafter our schools may be required to keep class sizes down in order to limit the spread of future waves of COVID-19. Why, when this is a possibility, or when our schools may need to invest in far greater technology in order to achieve successful distance learning, would we needlessly hinder their opportunity to adapt with this proposed cut? It is senseless, and it spits in the face of the vast majority of residents who have chosen to speak out to you about this possible decision. I heard far too many members of the RTM reference "inefficiencies" to be hypothetically found within the Education budget that will

allow for these cuts to be absorbed by the school system, and I demand that these supposed "inefficiencies" be brought to light and be quantified before you consider any cuts to this budget. You are all elected to this body to do this job and make difficult decisions, but those decisions should not be a shot in the dark. They should be meticulous, calculated, and well-considered. If you believe these inefficiencies exist, I believe it is squarely your responsibility to point them out rather than passing the buck along to the Board of Education. The buck must stop with you. Doing anything less is, in my opinion, shirking your responsibility as representatives of the people of our town.

I do not know Superintendent Giard to be an individual to waste or ask for funds needlessly. He has proven himself to be a shrewd and adept leader during his time with us, and Waterford Schools have greatly improved in their regional standings and test scores since he took the reins. He knows what he is doing, he knows exactly what he is requesting, and he has made tremendous strides towards cutting down on needless spending from my perspective. Our schools' proposed budget, without the \$470,000, would result in a level budget to the prior fiscal year. Why would this body; despite support from the Superintendent, Board of Education, Board of Finance, and hundreds of members of the public that I know have now signed a petition demanding that you reverse your proposed \$470,000 cut; look to make punitive cuts of \$470,000 to our schools' budget when they are in need now more than ever? None of us knows what the fall will bring and how much that may cost the schools, and I would think that this body would look for ways to be supportive and help our education services in their time of need rather than seek ways to drag it down and reduce morale, along with our administration's ability to deliver quality education.

A cut of any size is reckless, and please consider me one additional resident that is demanding that you leave the Board of Education budget intact.

Respectfully submitted,



Joshua Steele Kelly
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