Dear RTM members,

As I have been on the BOE and finance committee for the last five years, I feel compelled to comment on the impact your cut of $470,000 will have on the students and staff of Waterford Public Schools, how our administration has tried over the past few years to remedy any discovered "inefficiencies", and how to make our BOE budget more manageable and sustainable in an uncertain future.

Our budget started with a "wiggle room" of only 0.32% due to contractual obligations and mandates. Then the BOE cut $163,000 and an additional $400,000 was eliminated from the capital budget, delaying repairs into the future.

So, with a $470,000 cut, which represents 0.92%, we are forced to look at more than that 0.32% "wiggle room." We have no choice but to look at staff reduction. We can go with uniforms, professional development, subs for secretaries, etc, but they just won't add up to $470,000; especially after $163,000 has already been cut. The great strides we have been making with the help of our coaches and dedicated staff, will be slowed, halted, or worse: reversed! **Programs** will suffer. **Staff will have to be cut.**

Some of you spoke of finding "inefficiencies" in our budget. Let me assure you, Tom and his staff want every cent of the budget to be thoughtfully spent on things that improve our educational system, and they weed out any waste and employ cost saving measures.
Over the years they have or will be saving by:
Replacing all lighting (motion activated already) with LED lighting: $25,000yr
All new buildings have Geothermal heating and cooling.
Clark Lane gas conversion: $33,000yr.
Friendship School students serviced in house: $500,000yr.
Built-in special eduction programs for 101 students: $2,000,000yr tuition.
K-8 districts paying tuition to the **General Fund: $183,000** next yr (which would be the equivalent of a taxable property worth $9,300,000!!
Elimination of top steps for new hires on last teacher contact: $8,000,000/20yrs
Set precedent for all other contracts newly negotiated and future ones.
High deductible health plans mandatory
Marketing of WHS to attract former Magnet tuition students costs: 25% reduction in last 4 yrs
Bought our own van fleet: $122,000yr savings
Use of virtual servers vs traditional replacements.
Tom and his staff are always looking for ways to save money and have saved us millions in "inefficiencies."

The administration and staff work on the budget starting in November. They constantly listen to the suggestions of BOE, BOF, RTM, and town officials, but no directives were given until this process was finalized. The administration and BOE understand your concerns for "sustainability," **but last minute, drastic reductions do not produce sound educational practices.**

I propose we map out a mutually acceptable scenario for the next three years, so we can phase out whatever reductions need to be made using educational best practices and professional expertise to guide us instead of knee jerk reactions. We employ our administration and staff because they are the experts in the field. Let them do their jobs to the best of their ability.

It is just not possible to reduce this budget by $633,000 ($163+$470) and $400,000 in capital improvements and still maintain the **programs and staff** that have made us an exemplary district in our state.

I fervently request you consider a much smaller reduction in the BOE budget. The % increase only represents about $36 per household, and with no town tax increase projected, taxes will not be increasing. **We can still maintain the great results our programs and staff have produced. We can continue to be recognized as a community that vales education. We can continue to increase property values.**
It is up to you.

Sincerely,
Marcia Benvenuti
BOE

Ps: Mr. Dembeck, I request permission as a taxpayer and BOE member, to read my statement during the public comment portion of your RTM meeting tonight.