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Mr. Campo and RTM Members,

I am a resident of Waterford and have 2 children who have or are going through the Waterford school system. I have also taught in this town for 23 years and I am shocked at what went on at Tuesday night's RTM meeting. That budget was put together carefully by an administration I trust whole-heartedly. Tom Giard submitted a budget that was lean and reflects what the students in this town need to continue moving forward, as education is constantly changing. He was careful and purposeful in his delivery of why this budget is needed. In addition, it has been reviewed CAREFULLY by both the Board of Finance, as well as, the Board of Education (who made difficult cuts already) and both groups felt it was ready to be approved. The proposal of one member to cut \$470,000 out of what is needed to educate our children is appalling. I realize we are all in a difficult place currently with Covid-19 changing all of our lives, but let's not forget what is important here: our students and staff who teach them. When a number as large as that gets thrown out at the last stage of a budget process, you all need to realize that means cuts to programs and staff! It was also interesting to me that the attorney outlined the process on the ability for the schools to ask for more money when needed. Please note that no superintendents in our district have ever done that and this will not likely happen in this case either!

I would have been much more open-minded if members of the RTM came up with reasonable suggested places to cut. I was particularly offended when the mention of instructional coaches came up. I am the PreK-5 Technology Coach and I cannot believe that the idea of an alternative to subs covering PPTs is having coaches cover classrooms. Really?? Is the fee of \$95 per day really going to save the kind of money proposed? Very few members of the RTM, other than the ones who are teachers, understand the PPT meeting process and the scheduling that goes into that. To dictate to a parent a meeting time based on when their child has reading so the ELA coach can cover is not possible. This idea was short sighted and demonstrated a complete lack of understanding of the significant contributions that coaches bring to Waterford Schools. It ill-considered the high-level benefits that coaches make to moving our district forward. Their roles have been critical at this time to the success of distance learning in this district and people need to know this. It makes me think there is an agenda to bring this particular line item of the budget to the forefront once again. Bringing up a specific position was absurd and targeted and now, with this harsh decision, the RTM is passing this job back onto the Board of Ed who have already been tasked with the difficulty of making decisions about cuts before.

I also question some of the voting procedures. There were three members who abstained from the vote due to being teachers. They clearly did so because they felt there was a conflict. There were also a few RTM members who have close family members/siblings who are teachers and they were allowed to have a say? Even though their votes negatively affected their family members, it still makes me question conflicts of interest. The explanation the lawyer gave was not clear on if all members were eligible to vote.

I know the Waterford community wants the school district in our town to be at the forefront with current new practices, have effective programs and wants test scores raised. As a parent and taxpayer, that is what I want, too. To continue to do that, money is necessary. I am not sure why right now this board is deciding to take a stand when taxes will not even be affected next year.

What is the timing all about? Do taxpayers know that? I doubt it. That should have been highlighted in Tuesday's meeting. The RTM should have supported that budget instead of letting happen what it did. We elected a group we felt would support our schools. We are in a time where everyone needs to pull together and support each other, not go against what our educators are saying is necessary to support the students in Waterford!

Laura McCue