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WATERFORD, CT

2025 OCT 14 A 9:43

ATTEST: [signature]
TOWN CLERK

To the members of the Ethics Commission,

Thank you for offering a public hearing on the Ethics complaints filed on May 7th and May 15th. Probable cause for this hearing was determined on September 8th. Would you please share the timeline from when everyone received the complaint to when a determination was made? If 8 complaints were received in May, why didn't the commission meet until July? I would think that receipt of any complaint would prompt a special meeting and prevent some of the political commentary seen about this happening right before an election.

Much of the discussion from the Respondents on Tuesday, October 7th focused on the process of budget hearings of the RTM. The content of the budget process and discussion is irrelevant to this complaint. Glenn Patterson, who is not named as a specific witness, was allowed to speak to the transfer of funds from operating to capital. There was no public comment, and his insight was not relevant to the question at hand. Why wasn't the Moderator (who was also present) asked about the process of the RTM and/or allowed to comment on the validity of some of the Respondents' comments about the RTM?

Similarly, you questioned the Complainant about sharing the Advisory opinion. The Majority Leader shares that information with the caucus. Does the Minority Leader do the same? Why wasn't that question asked? Again, why didn't you ask the opinion of the Moderator? It is not the responsibility of the Majority Leader to share that opinion on the floor of the RTM. It is also not the responsibility of the Majority Leader to stop a vote in process. Attorney Avena's advice about voting is included in the May 11, 2020, RTM meeting held via Zoom around the 1:58:30 mark (transcript attached). One of the Respondents claimed they only voted because they didn't agree with the process and the vote was contentious. Clarification from Moderator would have helped explain there are other ways to voice disagreement with the process than voting on budgets where one usually abstains.

A question was repeatedly raised by Paul Helvig about the qualifier of "substantial". One of the Respondents was a Substitute Paraeducator and not part of a Bargaining Unit at the time of the vote. This person was subsequently hired as a Full Time Paraeducator. Was the hire based on merit as a Paraeducator, or was some level of preference shown because of this person's position on the budget? An across-the-board abstention from all employees would essentially prevent this perceived conflict. In my opinion, this is a clear example of what the Complainant was referring to when stating that the intent of filing this violation was to protect all Town employees who choose to serve in volunteer elected positions.

During your deliberations prior to the public hearing, you determined that there was probable cause to substantiate these violations. All Respondents stated the information included in the complaints was accurate. That information includes that they violated specific sections of the Ethics Ordinance. All Respondents have admitted that they did vote on the BOE budget, and they are all BOE employees. Three of them have a pattern of abstaining. There is discussion that happens on the floor of the RTM. At any time, these Respondents had the opportunity to share their displeasure with the process. Participation in that discussion is encouraged. Voting yes or no is a conflict.

In an effort to protect all of our elected volunteers and Town employees, I ask that you uphold your determination of probable cause. I honestly don't understand why it is so hard to just abstain on the budgets you or anyone else living in same house may benefit or be penalized by voting or not voting. Yes, I say penalized because other employees who want to abstain could be viewed as not supporting their boss like others who vote. I believe at the very least this commission should advise to abstain from votes involving their employer. Just as town attorney did with his statement to the RTM in May of 2020 (again transcript attached). I was also on the RTM when the town attorney made the statement and I'm available for questions if needed.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Rocchett

Transcription is taken from an AI service and edited by listening to the recording of the meeting.

Avena: Okay folks, this is Town Attorney Rob Avena. Before there's any substantive votes, I just wanted to state that I have got several requests this week to go over voting procedures within the general budget of the town, both on the Board of Ed side and all town agencies. We have a wonderful RTM, and it's made up of many members. We don't have any rules that require that any town employees or any Board of Education employees not serve on the RTM. Over the years, we've had policemen, we've had firemen, and I understand we have also school teachers who work in the Board of Education. I just want to go over again that the way we have done it in the past, and I can go over the ethics standards in the Town, is that there are these sub-motions that directly reflect the individual budget that you may or may not be compensated by.

The second vote is the general vote at the end of this session on the entire budget of the town, in which many issues are intermingled. The way we have traditionally approached it is, if it is more than likely possible that you're facing a bit of a personal conflict when you attempt to vote on the sub-budget that directly relates to your employment or that of a near relative or family member. I know some of you are new this year, so I wanted to go over that. It is a personal decision of the the member, the body, as a whole, cannot instruct you. I do try to advise people on an individual basis as to what that conflict can entail. I would advise that in a traditional sense that when you're in the sub-budget process, you not exercise and you can abstain voting. It does not mean that you have to abstain from entering into the debate. That's called a recusal. You're not required to recuse yourself from the entire debate. You are, in certain instances, required to abstain from if that matter appears to be a personal conflict. So, with those instructions, that will carry through for the entire four days you go over every budget and sub-budget in the Town. If you're particularly affected by that sub budget, I would recommend abstention the very end of the budget process when they're all commingled, you're rather distant at that point, from any involvement, and you can cast a vote for the general total town budget of the Town of Waterford. I hope that's so. With those admonitions, I would ask that you begin the first substantive vote of the town budget tonight. And I'll answer questions.

(Comments by Nick Gauthier unrelated to this discussion were removed for purposes of this transcript)

Dembek: Mike Bono, I think you raised your hand during the town attorney's comments.

Bono: Yes. Mr. Avena, being a new member of the RTM, I have a question. I hope you can help me. out with a simple yes or no because that was kind of I was a little confused at your statement there. Is there a case for an ethics violation if you vote on a budgetary matter affects your personal financial interest?

Avena: Yes, we do have an ethics ordinance in town. It's section 2 50 of our chapter of ordinances. The issue of whether or not someone has ethically violated by voting in their personal interest has to be advanced to that commission. And it is only the commission's decision determines whether or not there's been an ethical conflict that occurred. The sections that I am referring to tonight are from those ethical ordinances. they're basically saying that if you have an immediate connection to your vote, it's different than whether it's a distant connection to the vote. And that's up to the ethics commission to decide that distinction. Generally speaking, if you are voting and a general group of which you are part of will or not benefit, that's part of the consideration. In other words, there is no easy answer, but I have always traditionally taken the position, as I do on every board, including our planning and zoning commission, that when in doubt, when you think you have any personal interest involved, abstaining is perfectly fine. That's why we've got more than like three members on every board. So, abstaining is a fine action to take in certain instances. And I try to advise people individually if they contact me.

Question To Avena 1/2

Gmail

Elizabeth Ritter <betsyritter24@gmail.com>

Questions for Ethics Commission Meeting on Thursday

5 messages

Elizabeth Ritter <betsyritter24@gmail.com> Mon, Oct 13, 2025 at 5:10 PM
To: Robert Avena <ravena@sswbgg.com>
Cc: Adam Stone <astone@breezeline.net>, Alan Messier <amessier@messiermassad.com>, Chris Nailon <Substewy@outlook.com>, Paul Helvig <plhelvig@sbcglobal.net>, Elizabeth Ritter <betsyritter24@gmail.com>, Sara Mallari <saramallari@gmail.com>, Cathy Patterson <claropatterson@gmail.com>

Hello Rob,

I have a few questions for you for our Ethics Commission meeting on Thursday. That meeting is a continuation of the Public Hearing we held on October 6th. We are meeting at 5:30 on Thursday. If you are not able to attend would you be able to answer them here and I can get it to the Commission members?

As always, thank you.

Here is the message from Cathy Patterson:

Cathy Patterson 4:57 PM (6 minutes ago)
to me, Adam, Alan, Chris, Paul, Sara

During our hearing I did not realize that the town attorney routinely attends RTM meetings.

What is the role of the Town attorney at RTM meetings?

Is he there as a legal advisor to the RTM ?
Was the attorney at both/ or either of the meetings in question?

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TOWN CLERK

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Betsy Ritter

Robert Avena <RAvena@sswbgg.com> Tue, Oct 14, 2025 at 9:18 AM
To: Elizabeth Ritter <betsyritter24@gmail.com>

Hi these are pretty straightforward let me check with Nick I believe he attended one night of the RTM budget hearings and I did the second one last May ...
Sent from my iPhone

> On Oct 13, 2025, at 5:10 PM, Elizabeth Ritter <betsyritter24@gmail.com> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]

Robert Avena <RAvena@sswbgg.com> Wed, Oct 15, 2025 at 4:35 PM
To: Elizabeth Ritter <betsyritter24@gmail.com>

Hi Betsy : I have an appointment tomorrow evening. However, to answer the Commission member's question the town attorney (Nick or me) is assigned under the Charter/Ordinances to attend meetings of the RTM when requested and to reply to legal questions directed through the Moderator of the RTM during the meeting. We did not do a search of the May Budget meeting minutes for May, 2025, but I believe Nick was at one or more of the budget meetings and I also attended one meeting.

Question To Avena 2/2

Robert A. Avena, Esquire
Suisman Shapiro
20 South Anguilla Road
P.O. Box 1445
Pawcatuck, CT 06379

Direct Line: (860) 650-8008
Main Line: (860) 442-4416
Facsimile: (860) 599-3778
E-mail: ravena@sswbgg.com
www.suismanshapiro.com

From: Elizabeth Ritter <betsyritter24@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 13, 2025 5:10 PM
To: Robert Avena <RAvena@sswbgg.com>
Cc: Adam Stone <astone@breezeline.net>; Alan Messier <amessier@messiermassad.com>; Chris Nailon <Substewy@outlook.com>; Paul Helvig <plhelvig@sbcglobal.net>; Elizabeth Ritter <betsyritter24@gmail.com>; Sara Mallari <saramallari@gmail.com>; Cathy Patterson <claropatterson@gmail.com>
Subject: Questions for Ethics Commission Meeting on Thursday

[Quoted text hidden]

Elizabeth Ritter <betsyritter24@gmail.com> Wed, Oct 15, 2025 at 5:37 PM
To: Adam Stone <astone@breezeline.net>, Alan Messier <amessier@messiermassad.com>, Chris Nailon <Substewy@outlook.com>, Paul Helvig <plhelvig@sbcglobal.net>, Elizabeth Ritter <betsyritter24@gmail.com>, Sara Mallari <saramallari@gmail.com>, Cathy Patterson <claropatterson@gmail.com>

I received the following from Atty Avena in response to the questions I sent on to him.
[Quoted text hidden]
--
Betsy

Elizabeth Ritter <betsyritter24@gmail.com> Wed, Oct 15, 2025 at 5:39 PM
To: Robert Avena <RAvena@sswbgg.com>

Thanks Rob. I shared your response with the Commission members.
[Quoted text hidden]
--
Betsy

wolfley 1|2

Letter to Ethics Commission

3:41 PM (33 minutes ago)

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2025 OCT 16 A 11:26
ATTEST: [signature] TOWN CLERK

Laurie Wolfley

Please see this message for the Ethics Commission:

To the Ethics Commission—

Some months ago, when an RTM member called for a vote to reduce Board of Education increases for Chromebooks/iPads and health insurance, several members of the RTM were extremely concerned; they were aware that the RTM does not have the authority to target specific line items in such a move. Those members promptly voted against the modified budget, as they felt it was their only recourse to call attention to the inappropriate motion. If anyone should have been cited for an ethics violation here, it's certainly the folks who disregarded the rules and circumvented protocol to make the motion in the first place.

The rules and protocol are in place for a reason, and that reason is that the Board of Education is responsible for determining the way in which its funds are to be allocated. That responsibility is not taken lightly: In the months leading up to the spring 2025 budget hearings, Waterford's Board of Education members worked tirelessly to keep BOE budget increases as low as possible. As part of that work, they carefully examined cost-analysis spreadsheets that estimated the need for expenditures on such items as Chromebooks and iPads, as well as on health insurance. The increases in the 2025-2026 budget for these items were then agreed upon by the bipartisan BOE members who partook in that rigorous work. There is no room for interference with last-minute reductions in those line items—and certainly not by RTM members who were not part of that process.

All of us in municipal government volunteer our time and energy toward a single shared goal: to provide excellent services at as low a cost as possible. The RTM should have trusted that the Board of Ed had taken its responsibility seriously when it determined a final budget. I am grateful to the RTM members who attempted to call out the inappropriate line-item reductions.

Childs 1/4

Waterford Code of Ordinances:
https://library.municode.com/ct/waterford/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT2ADPE_CH2.50ETCO

*(note there is no link or attachment connecting to the Ethics Commission Advisory Opinion.)

Ethics website:
https://onboard.waterfordct.org/board/3192

*(Ethics Advisory Opinion not available here.)

Ethics agendas and minutes:
https://www.waterfordct.org/AgendaCenter/Ethics-Commission-9

*(note there is no meeting in or around the 9/24/2021 stamp date for receiving the Ethics Commission Advisory Opinion. Meeting minutes from June 3rd reflect a discussion regarding an Advisory statement, however one is not attached. June 29 and November 16, 2021 do not include this guidance document nor does it appear to have been approved by the commission.)

2.50.010 - Preamble and declaration of policy and purpose.

A. Public office is a trust conferred by public authority for a public purpose. The trust of the public is essential for government to function effectively. Public policy must be based on honest and fair deliberations and decisions. Policy development must be free from threats, undue influence, and all forms of impropriety, so that the confidence of the public is not eroded. By enacting this code of ethics, the Town of Waterford seeks to maintain and increase the confidence of our citizens in the integrity and fairness of their government.

B. The proper operation of town government requires that all public officials and town employees shall be impartial and responsive to the public interest, that public office and employment should not be used for personal gain or advantage, and that public officials and town employees should not place themselves in positions where private interest conflicts with public duty.

C. In recognition of these principles and pursuant to Sections 7-148(c)(10)(B) and 7-148h of the Connecticut General Statutes, there is established a code of ethics for all town public officials and employees, whether elected or appointed, paid or unpaid.

Childs 2 | 4

2.50.020 - Definitions

E."Town employee" means an individual working for salary or wages from the town, including board of education employees, whether on a part-time or full-time basis and whether the position is reviewed by personnel review board or not, but does not include the town attorney or any public official.

2.50.030 - Code of ethics.

A. Public officials or town employees have an interest that is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of duties or employment in the public interest and of responsibilities as prescribed by the laws of this state if they have reason to believe or expect that they, their immediate family, or a business with which they are associated will derive a direct monetary gain or suffer a direct monetary loss, as the case may be, by reason of their official activity.

2.50.030 A was cited in the complaint of violation paperwork:
*As an elected RTM member, my role is to participate in discussions, read materials, and vote on motions before the body. As an employee of the Board of Education, it is impossible for me to derive direct monetary gain or suffer a direct monetary loss, as the case may be by reason of my official activity.

B. Public officials or town employees do not have an interest that is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of duties in the public interest and of responsibilities as prescribed by the laws of this state if any benefit or detriment accrues to them, their immediate family, or a business with which they are associated as a member of a profession, occupation, or group to no greater extent than any other member of such profession, occupation, or group.

*As a Board of Education employee it is not possible for me to accrue a benefit or detriment to a greater extent than any other member of such profession, occupation, or group.

C. A public official or town employee may not take official action on any matter in which a substantial conflict (as defined in subsection A of this section) exists. If the conflict is disclosed, a public official or town employee may participate in discussions with or give opinions or recommendations to a town board, agency, commission, committee, department, or another public official or town employee.

2.50.030 C was cited in the complaint of violation paperwork:
*As stated above there is no possibility of me deriving a direct monetary gain or suffering a direct monetary loss due to my casting a vote.

Childs 3/4

2.50.060 - Advisory opinions

A. The ethics commission shall issue advisory opinions with regard to the requirements of the code of ethics of the town upon the written request of any public official or town employee. Advisory opinions rendered by the commission, until amended or revoked, shall be binding on the commission and shall be deemed the final decisions of the commission.

B. Any advisory opinion concerning the public official or town employee who requested the opinion and who acted in reliance thereon, in good faith, shall be binding upon the commission. It shall be an absolute defense in any action brought under the provisions of the code of ethics (Section 2.50.030 of this Code) that the accused party acted in reliance upon such advisory opinion, assuming there are no relevant facts of which the commission was not aware when the opinion was rendered that would change the opinion of the commission.

C. Each opinion of the ethics commission shall include a disclaimer to the effect that the opinion may be different if different facts are presented to the commission at a later date.

> *Heavily referred to "Town of Waterford Ethics Commission Advisory Opinion is not included as a link from the Chapter 2.50 section of the Town of Waterford Ordinances. This document is not included in our Town Ordinances. This document is not contained in any of the 2021 meeting minutes for June or November.

The fourth paragraph states "*...is adjusting it's posture on the question of family relative conflicts, and is taking a specific position on this question - one that we have long debated.*"

Paragraph six states:
"These sections of the Code preclude public officials from taking actions where a conflict of interest exists. Such conflict includes circumstances where a benefit - real or perceived - would accrue to the official, their family or their business relations as result of such action. Public officials take official actions when they vote "yes" or "no" where this type of question is before them. This Advisory Opinion does not intend to restrict or limit any representative from full and active discussion and examination of any and all issues that come before them, as is provided in Sec. 2.50.030. It is, however, our opinion that public officials must abstain from voting in situations in which circumstances exist that give rise to a conflict of interest or a public perception of such a conflict. Examples include situations when the Board or Commission member is employed by the Town, or is in a circumstance that gives rise to a perception of conflict of interest."

> *With this statement the First Selectman cannot vote on any item that would benefit him even if it was a perceived benefit. A spouse of a firefighter would not be able to vote on any fire services or emergency services item.

Childs 4/4

Paragraph seven includes:

"*For example, a town official is not immune or exempt from a real of perceived conflict of interest when voting on issues affecting a family member in a collective bargaining unit. Actions taken by public officials that appear to the public as improper will determine the existence of a conflict and, subsequently, determine the appropriateness of the behavior.*"

*With this statement, no family member of a town employee could ever vote as a member of a town board or commission.

*Board or Commission members who have godparents of their children would be excluded from voting in their favor.

*Board or Commission members who reportedly live at a fire house would need to abstain from all Fire Services and Emergency services items

*Any parent who has children in the school system or recreation programs would need to abstain from voting on Recreation and Parks and Board of Education items

*This restriction of voting removes 20% of the RTM from voting on the largest component of the town's budget.

Benvenuti 1|2

RTM public comment 5/14/25

I want to address the haphazard, inefficient way our town seems to be handling the recurring expenses of the BOE-like chrome books, capital improvements in general, and the burdens and benefits of a fully funded education budget.

First the sad saga of the chrome books. The BOE followed town instructions and placed the chrome books in capital improvements only to be denied and told to put them back in the operating budget. This occurred after the BOE finance committee started to fine tune and set the operating budget. It pushed the BOE budget up unexpectedly, making the budget higher than preferred. The administration and BOE found some savings and agreed upon a budget under 5%. One of the lowest in Southeastern Ct.

Now at the eleventh hour, the RTM decided the chrome books should be put back into the capital expenditures. This will require the BOE to go to the BOS, then the BOF, and then back to the RTM and request the funding. This flip-flopping mess has cost the taxpayers countless wasted hours of preparation and revision, will delay purchases, and it will make the BOE budget seem lower than it really is.

It and the the insurance cut artificially put the BOE budget at 3.85% and misleads the taxpayers. Next year when the BOE adds the chrome books back in the operating budget, because it is a recurring expense, it will automatically look higher when in reality it is not.

The 3.85% is just an illusion to fool the public. The BOE budget is really 4.85% and should reflect that.

Mr. Giard presented real data that shows that Waterford public schools are excelling in every way and out ranking many of our neighboring communities, while our costs are below those of our neighbors. WPS are doing an exceptional job with below average funding.

Benvenuti 2/2

I am a senior. I am on a fixed income. I have lived in Waterford for over 65 years. I regularly volunteer in the preK-fifth grade classrooms at Great Neck School. I see the needs and the great lengths the administration and staff go to to do the best they can with less money. The benefits we reap from an exemplary school system far outweigh the few dollars saved by lowering the budget. We must be transparent and realistic about the process, the needs, and the costs of town business.

I urge you to stop this shell game, return the chrome books to the operating budget, and help keep WPS on top, by fully funding the BOE budget.

Submitted to be included in the record,

by Marcia Benvenuti
1 Raymond Ln.
Waterford, CT

Sheehan/Patterson 1/3

May 2, 2025

John W. "Bill" Sheehan
19 Laurel Crest Dr.
Waterford, CT 06385

Glenn Patterson
7 Leary Dr.
Waterford, CT 06385

Mr. Paul Goldstein
Moderator
Waterford Representative Town Meeting
15 Rope Ferry Road
Waterford, CT 06385

Mr., Goldstein

According to the Agenda of the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) for the Annual Budget Hearing and Special Meeting, the RTM will be considering a resolution for a pilot program for approved Capital Projects within the FY26 budget.

Rather than approving that resolution, in our capacity as individual members of the Board of Finance (BOF), we propose that the RTM send to a Standing Committee (possibly the Legislative and Administration Committee) the attached proposed change to the Code of Ordinances.

There is sufficient time between now and the FY2027 budget to pass the proposed ordinance and be ready in the FY2027 budget to have the best of both the designation procedure and the direct appropriation procedure.

We are sending this letter and proposed ordinance as individual members of the Board of Finance and not as a request or recommendation of the BOF.

Sincerely,

J. W. Sheehan   Glenn Patterson.

Copy to (with encl): Town Clerk Campo
First Selectman Brule

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WATERFORD, CT
2025 MAY -2 P 2:38
ATTEST:
TOWN CLERK

Sheehan | Patterson 2/3

Proposed Ordinance Change for Capital Funds

3.04.020 - Reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures *and Current Capital Fund* established.

1. There is created a reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures.

a. The Reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures will have two types of funding- Appropriated and Designated.

1) If the expenditure requires accumulating funding over multiple years, the annual funding will be designated for the project After the total funds needed for the expenditure are accumulated, the funds will be appropriated by action of the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Finance, and the Representative Town Meeting.

2) If the expenditure is well-defined and funding is complete in the initial request, the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Finance and the Representative Town Meeting shall appropriate the funds at the initial presentation.

3) If the expenditure is not well defined in the initial presentation, it will be designated and the Department or Board will have to return to the BOS, BOF, and RTM to become appropriated. This is likely to occur for an expenditure proposed in the First Selectman's Capital Plan.

b. The Current Capital Fund is established for expenditures that are expected to be completed in the Fiscal Year Proposed and funding will be considered appropriated when approved by the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and Representative Town Meeting.

1) If the expenditure is not complete in the fiscal year proposed, It should be transferred to the Reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring Fund by action by the Board of Selectman, Board of Finance, and Representative Town Meeting before the end of the fiscal year.

2) If the expenditure is not complete in the fiscal year proposed and it is not transferred to the Reserve Fund, the remaining expenditure will be transferred to the Unassigned Fund Balance of the General Fund at the end of the fiscal year. If all that remains of the expenditure is final invoicing and payment then the funds may be encumbered to make those final payments in the next fiscal year.

b. The Board of Finance shall review the progress of projects in both funds quarterly.

c. Funds left after the completion of the expenditure shall be returned to the Unassigned Fund Balance of the General Fund if from the Current Capital Fund and to the Undesignated fund

Sheehan/Patterson 3/3

Balance of the Capital and Nonrecurring Fund if from the Reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures.

2. *Implementation*

a. *This ordinance change will be effective with the fiscal year 2027 budget.*

b. *In June 2026 the Board of Finance will transfer any outstanding projects from the Capital Improvement Fund to the Capital Nonrecurring Expenditure Fund.*

c. *The Capital Improvement Fund will be renamed the Current Year Capital Fund.*

Timothy Fioravanti
Waterford, CT, RTM District 3

As a member of the Waterford Representative Town Meeting (RTM) and an employee of the Board of Education, I want to address recent concerns regarding my vote on the Board of Education budget.

On May 5, I voted **against** the proposed Board of Education budget. I did not take this decision lightly. My vote was not made out of self-interest, but rather out of a deep concern for the **integrity of our town's budget process** and the **precedent being set** by the actions taken during those meetings.

Specifically, the motions introduced by the Majority Leader, Danielle Steward-Gelinas, sought to make **line-item reductions** within the Board of Education budget — targeting recurring purchases of essential technology and increased health insurance costs. These motions not only deviated from **past practice** but also **violated long-standing principles** that prohibit the RTM from dictating specific line-item cuts or exact dollar amounts in the Board of Education budget.

The Board of Finance Chair explicitly stated that this was not an appropriate or responsible way to fund education, and I agreed. Allowing these reductions to stand would have compromised the autonomy and operational integrity of our schools.

Let me be clear:

- I did **not** vote to increase my own compensation or benefits.
- I did **not** vote to shield the Board of Education from accountability.
- I voted **against** a flawed and procedurally inappropriate budget proposal that would have harmed our schools and ignored the proper role of the RTM.

I recognize that, as a public employee and elected official, I am held to high ethical standards — and I welcome that scrutiny. But I also believe that ethical governance includes **standing up against improper actions**, even when it is politically uncomfortable to do so.

I remain committed to transparency, fairness, and good governance. My record reflects that — and I will continue to uphold the trust placed in me by the people of Waterford.