

David Campo

From: Kim Podeszwa <KPodeszwa@waterfordschools.org>
Sent: Wednesday, May 13, 2020 10:15 AM
To: David Campo
Subject: RTM vote

RECEIVED DISTRICT
WATERFORD, CT
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David Campo
TOWN CLERK

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Hi Dave,

I write to the RTM first, as a tax payer. The RTM's vote for the BOE to give back \$470,000 was shocking. The RTM knew that Mr. Giard worked hard to give a lean budget proposal and was further tasked with trimming off even more money, prior to the BOE's final vote. The students of Waterford will be greatly affected by the RTM's decision, which has no effect on next year's taxes being raised or lowered. There was no need to do this at this time.

The member, who made the proposal, made it clear she was continuing the efforts of a BOE member, who targeted instructional coaches. Why even use that example, other than to plant that seed, again? No other RTM member could back up the suggested amount with any other concerns about specific line items. If there was a belief that the BOE had more to give, why weren't there questions during Mr. Giard's presentation to back up these concerns?

If the intent is to be smarter about how we spend, then be smart about it. Get informed and know what you are truly talking about. To throw out numbers based on meetings you were NOT in attendance and put your eggs in the basket of people who are making ridiculous suggestions about substitutes and answering phones to cover \$470,000, as well as suggesting the district get rid of positions that have made our students and teachers so successful, is irresponsible.

Now, I will write to the RTM as an instructional coach. If you are going to hang your hat on instructional coaches losing positions, take into consideration that every local district benefits from coaching positions. In fact, East Lyme just added more coaching positions to their budget. I am not going to list the benefits that Waterford has experienced from instructional coaching, but please look at the growing scores and successes of our students. That does not just happen without the guidance in curriculum, instruction, professional development, and the expertise of coaches.

If you need a current example of the impact instructional coaches have had on our students, look at how seamlessly we transitioned from classrooms to the online learning management systems. The coaches were the people who were tasked with the responsibility to condense all curriculums into a compacted, paced plan to ensure our teachers could provide instruction aligned with the Connecticut State Standards. We trained teachers to use the two platforms for grades K-12, researched and vetted the best online resources, created interactive digital lessons, and supported para professionals in rolling out the curriculum with brand new technology. All online learning lessons were aligned across the district because of our guidance and leadership. Through all of this, we are the liaisons between teachers, departments, special education teams, interventionists, and administration. Coaches are available every moment of the day to plan, teach, and troubleshoot with teachers.

This decision to cut even more money from the BOE budget will drastically affect many children and families, who count on our programs to be the best they can be. This economic hit will have a ripple effect on every student and teacher. As a district we have built a strong foundation over the last seven years, which cannot withstand a half of a million dollar hit, at this time. We should be working together to support the students during these difficult times. Taking even more away from their educational plans could be a devastating blow to our students' diverse needs.

As you move forward, be informed and be very cognizant of our future. Find ways to build a plan together, rather than dismantle what is not broken. When I voted for my RTM, I had much higher hopes of a team effort to do what is best for all of Waterford. The votes seemed to be straight down party lines and if so, that is a disappointment to this tax payer.

Sincerely,
Kim Podeszwa