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FINANCE COMMITTEE  
FY 2020-2021 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING  
MINUTES  
MAY 16, 2020

Call to Order: The Chair called the virtual public hearing to order at 10:00 a.m.

Present: Chairman Lisa Valenti, Vice Chairman Dawn Cantafio, Kevin Shively, Michael Miller, Lori Rosasco-Schwartz, Tony Scinto, Mary Isaac, Alternate, Donna Seidell, Alternate. (arrived at 11:04 a.m.)

Also

Present: First Selectman Vicki A. Tesoro, Town Council Chairman Mary Beth Thornton, Chief Administrative Officers Kathleen McGannon, Cynthia Katske,

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The Chairman introduced the Committee members in attendance to all viewers and those listening in. The purpose of the virtual public hearing is to give the public the opportunity to voice their concerns. The Chair extended her gratitude on behalf of the Council for the many emails. This isn't the same budget the First Selectman had submitted before COVID-19 and further explained the Town Council doesn't have control over the BOE line item once they fund it.

The Committee would hear the public's comments in the order they are received and comments will be limited to 1-1.5 minutes and asked that they state their name and address for the record. This public hearing was live-streamed on Facebook

There were forty one (41) people who speak.

1. Frank Squiccimaro PTA president of Tashua Elementary School and Green Chairman at Tashua Knolls extended his gratitude to the Committee for their volunteerism. The reason they moved to Trumbull was for the schools and he volunteers for his daughter. Line items don't exist without money. People cheered for a 4.6% increase at the BOE meeting, 6% would be status quo and requested the Council restore the \$500,000. That line item will affect the entire community. This will keep the schools open at 4:00 for recreation

programs, cub scouts, daisies and various programs that affect the community as a whole. This will keep our shining community as it is and keep our property values up. This was all happening before the quarantine.

2. Cat Lamy of 47 Fawn Meadow Drive a Trumbull parent and member of the PTSA Council extended her gratitude for the Committee's service especially during this challenging time and asked that the Committee vote to restore the \$500,000. She realizes this will not solve all of the issues of the education budget but this is not a time to reduce funding.
3. Kaitlin Southard of 103 Ochsner Place is a business teacher at THS. As she finished her fourth year at THS it was devastating to be one of the many teachers that received a nonrenewal letter and a day later learned of the laundry list of cuts to be made many of whom are teachers she has worked closely with. Each person employed by the district plays a vital role. She couldn't imagine how Trumbull will thrive as a top educational system with these cuts. Four years ago she moved to Trumbull with her husband, a lifelong resident, to put roots down because of the schools. Over the past two weeks she has seen the impact these cuts have on her students as news travels that they will have fewer and fewer teachers returning to school in the fall or that clubs that provide them an opportunity to grow will no longer be available. One less teacher means so much more to the future of the children, one less teacher means fewer opportunities, larger class sizes, social and emotional growth via clubs will be affected. She requested the \$500,000 be returned so this Town that prides itself on its schools, community and for the children to prosper.
4. John Mastrianni president of the Education Association explained this year overnight teachers and students had their worlds turned upside down. Classrooms and schools became empty as the world transitioned into online learning. Instead of letting this new normal damage the students, Trumbull teachers rose to the occasion as they always do, to continue to provide high quality education to our children and giving them an opportunity to grow as people. They didn't let the uncertainty stop them from taking care of their students. The reward for this can't be a reduced budget limiting their abilities to perform their jobs. The only certainty for the 2021 school year will be uncertainty. Your actions with this budget will help us excel in this uncertain world or limit abilities to do so. A reduced budget will provide loss of services to the students, larger class sizes, reduced property values, and increase future expenses. All of this will hurt our kids. It has become clear that Trumbull teachers and their students did not cause Trumbull's budget crisis, COVID-19 didn't cause Trumbull's budget crisis, years of underfunding, mismanagement and lack of transparency has brought us to this point. As community leaders you can't place blame or expect the remedy to come from the very people who are trying to maintain the high standards. Students and teachers shouldn't be penalized to balance a budget. The first step should be to pass a budget that can fully fund the schools, then Trumbull can use the Council's BOE audit to identify and remedy its mistakes and to prevent them again in the future. Please don't play a political game with our students or our profession. Pass a budget that properly funds the schools, without that you will set

the children back for years. With so much uncertainty going forward, it's a gamble you can't take.

5. Sarah Broas of 25 Doris Street extended her gratitude to the Committee as they lead them through this difficult time and understood that the Committee has an impossible job and thanked them for their service. She is an 18-year educator, parent, taxpayer of two homes in Trumbull. She is especially concerned that the schools will be impacted not just this year but for many years to come with the decisions made on May 21<sup>st</sup>. She is concerned equally as a parent and a homeowner as she watches families flood from NYC and look for good towns to move into. The Council has the decision to decimate the school system because there are people in the community who may be struggling or to protect the system by asking those struggling to pay more. She recognized that's an impossible task. If these positions are eliminated they won't come back. Early intervention saves on costs in special ed., eliminating positions when we have moved to 100% digital teaching seems insane. Extracurricular activities are the programs that make our schools great and how the kids connect to school. Being connected to schools is proven to reduce anxiety and depression while keeping our schools safe. These cuts will have long standing effects on our town and school system. The problem is the BOE has a finite amount of money to work with, they have to make these tough decisions because the town has underfunded the system. It seems our town is unable to fund the resources necessary to operate a strong school system. Because this issue existed before COVID she feels the people have a right to know what the remedy would have been in COVID had not occurred. It's convenient to use COVID as an excuse and to ask teachers to sacrifice to fill the gap. People are moving out of NYC and we have the opportunity to show them Trumbull is a great place to raise a family and hopes their decision shows them that they value the backbone of the community.
6. Ruth Fontilla a town resident, PTSA Council president of 42 Louis Street read the following letter into the record: On April 22<sup>nd</sup> the Board of Finance reduced the First Selectman's proposed education budget increase from 3% to 2.5%. The Trumbull PTSA Council strongly encourages you to reinstate this budget back to 3%. We realize that these are unprecedented, trying times for our town and country. The implications of the COVID-19 pandemic affect every aspect of our personal and professional lives, as well as the operations of local, state, and national governments. At this critical moment, parents, educators, and students across our town need hope, not additional worry and uncertainty. While a reinstatement of this budget does not constitute a panacea, as some of the fiscal challenges plaguing Trumbull education's system will remain, it will ease some of the concerns of many community members who find themselves questioning the sustainability of our Town's educational system. The proposed cuts threaten foundational aspects of our education system. These cuts could compromise the educational experience of students at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. We urge you to restore the budget so that when the time comes for our students to return to their beloved schools they are provided with the individuals and tools necessary to remain intellectually engaged and socially empowered. Effective education policy making requires that reformers maintain a vision informed first by a realistic understanding of practices and needs at the classroom level, and second, by a recognition of the civically-

oriented, democratic goals of education. Such policy making is one that encourages democratic participation and dialogue among parents, educators, and elected officials. The students and teachers of Trumbull deserve access to a quality school system. We strongly urge you to restore the education budget to a level that will empower students to thrive and succeed. Thank you for your consideration and service to our community.

7. April Lang of 5584 Main Street spoke as a town resident, parent, a PTA member and a special ed teacher in town. The \$500,000 won't change a lot of this budget but it will certainly help, she is fearful for students who receive intervention across the middle school and elementary levels. Without reading and math specialists it will open the flood gates for special ed. At this time we have a lot of students there. Anything that can be done to help them to help these students to learn will be beneficial. Please reconsider putting the \$500,000 back into the budget. Anything will be helpful.
8. Amy Lehaney of 53 MacArthur Road a parent of two at Middlebrook Elementary School, and Middlebrook PTA president asked that the \$ 500,000 be reinstated. The BOE is facing an uphill battle with their finances. Anything added to that will help and ease some of the cuts.
9. Dan Neumann of the Trumbull Business Education Initiative and the Trumbull Academic for Challenge for Excellence Foundation asked that the \$500,000 be restored for the many reasons articulated by colleagues previously at this hearing. He extended his gratitude to the Committee for their diligence and hard work and to feel free to come back and ask any questions. Know that they appreciate the Committee's service.
10. Garrett Covino of 29 Ironwood Road and extended his gratitude to the Committee for their time and volunteerism. He is a parent of children attending the Trumbull public schools, and a member of the Booth Hill Father's Club. Because of these amazing educators his children continue to thrive. He is an educator of 20 years and has too often seen similar cuts in neighboring towns made to the detriment of the town, children and educators. Please fully fund the schools and get back to business.
11. Claire and David Weitzman of 209 Fernwood Road were present. Mr. Weitzman Extended his gratitude for all of the Committee's hard work during these unprecedented times. He lives and works in Trumbull as a social worker at Frenchtown School for the past 17 years. He moved here 20 years ago for the schools. He was thinking of being practical in his approach reminding people of the relationship of property values with the quality of the school system and property tax increases due to acute mismanagement of funds, or an emotional appeal of letting children be the targets of adult transgressions, or taking a common sense approach. He is trying uncommon sense and thinking outside the box. He spoke to the mission statement, Trumbull Public Schools documented mission statement is, "Striving to meet educational needs within a challenging and supportive environment." He highlighted to strive not to struggle. Struggle is what the district will do if the cuts go forward as planned. He suggested the town moonshot to the challenge as NASA does, don't ask if something can be done but ask how, so the children can land

safely in their schools to pursue their education with the honor and integrity worthy of our town's status and adherence of the mission. To do anything else would be a betrayal of the school mission. He knows the current budget crisis is untenable the proposed cuts will impact the academic, social and emotional wellbeing of our students. It's up to the elected officials that school's mission is not betrayed. He fears if these cuts go through that Trumbull's public schools will lose their high ranking and if that happens people won't move here because it will just be another town.

12. Penny Ploski of 195 Merrimac Drive is a parent and educator at a nearby town for over 25 years. Our students will need more, not less next year, they will need more support. At a time when we hear so much good about the teachers and how they have stepped up in such an amazing way, they now need more support not less. We hear how parents now see what it's like to educate the students, saying teachers deserve a million dollars and now there is talk of cuts. This is not a COVID-19 issue only, these are coming from years of underfunded budgets and shouldn't be put on the backs of teachers. \$500,000 is not putting it all back in and knows the Council is in a difficult situation, but asked to do what they could.
13. Dessy Lientz is a resident of 96 Putting Green N. is a parent and has lived in Trumbull for 8 years. She is the secretary of Daniels Farm School PTA and requested to restore the budget. She acknowledged the impossible situation the decision makers are in. They relocated here 8 years ago leaving family behind because of the schools. Trumbull is their family. This is the place they chose to raise their children and love it here and strongly urged to restore the budget back to a level that would allow some improvement and maintain our quality education system.
14. Dana Aponte of 29 Horseshoe Drive has been a resident for 11 years and an educator in a neighboring town. We had this crisis come and the educators stepped up immediately, they are working far more than ever, talking to parents and students day and night. This would take away their resources. She worries about her children as students, she is able to educate them at home but they will need a lot when they return, cutting specialists and staff members when we know classes are going to be smaller seems irresponsible when we know what is to come. This is a tough situation, everyone is struggling but it can't be taken out on the kids. They are number one priority.
15. Patty Woods Lavoie of 43 Chestnut Hill Road is a parent and was talking to a new neighbor who has little ones and how they had moved to Trumbull for the school system as did she. She felt sad because she didn't want to tell her neighbor what was going on with the budget. She feels we are doing a disservice to the kids and to the town. People move here for the schools. Her husband works in Hartford and noted that commute, they could have moved closer, but they came here specifically for the schools. They appreciate all of the teachers and administration and hopes this will all resolve.
16. Carolyn Collins of 56 Red Fox Lane thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak about such an important issue. She appreciates the difficult situation the Committee is in and hopes they have provided them with valuable insight. She is both a resident and an

educator in Trumbull. She and husband have lived in this town for 26 years and have raised their children here who attended the public school from kindergarten on. They continued their education at prestigious universities and she credits the teachers in large part for their success. Their dedication was instrumental in their success but also socially and emotionally. She asked that teachers be prioritized because it's teachers that will guide our children through this difficulty. At this time the children need us most, they will look to us for stability but will see noticeably different faces in the schools they call their second home. As an educator she has an appreciation for the teachers she is part of the system that has prioritized the academic success as well as the emotional wellbeing of the students. As teachers they are constantly adapting and integrating new strategies to provide the best learning environment and is concerned that going forward with this cut will be a shift in those priorities and will cause immeasurable harm. It will change the climate in the schools which is critical to the students, it will lead to a loss of services, increased class sizes, reduced services all of which will result in a lower quality education. The social and emotional wellbeing of our students couldn't be more obvious than it is right now. They look to us for stability and thinks the investment needs to made in teachers in order to make the investment in our students. She asked to seriously consider how important it is to restore the \$500,000.

17. Jill Angotra of 35 Asbury Road is a parent, she and her husband have been residents for 25 years, and she is also a teacher of the deaf in the Trumbull public school system. She has two unique perspectives. Her son received a solid foundation from the school system and couldn't have been prouder and is now in college. As a teacher of the deaf she travels through all of the schools and is proud of her colleagues' hard work and talent which has continued through the schools closing. She asked to restore the \$500,000 and to continue to keep the teachers and students in mind and to continue the tradition of solid teaching. She extended her gratitude for holding the meeting virtually.

The Chair noted that she had been asked how many people were participating, at this time there are 257 people participating, 40 of which are call-ins, there are 8 more people with their hands raised.

18. Amy Alterman of 32 Gray Rock Road is an educator and the wife of an educator. She thanked them for their service to the town and respectfully requested the \$500,000 be restored to the budget. These cuts are far reaching and will have negative impacts for years to come. NWEA published a report regarding the COVID slide, 70% of the students will return in the fall with a learning gain and in math students will show less learning gains returning with 50%. Students will be struggling and will need as much support as possible when they return to school. Please provide them with the funds to support our future.
19. Cathy Rubano of 97 Beechwood Avenue has been a resident since 1982 her children went through the district she is also a teacher at THS and is concerned about the budget. They are scheduled to lose teachers in the district as well as her department. She is the Social Studies department chair and as a result of the losses they won't be able to run the courses that are popular with the students. She has two grandchildren going through the

district, one of which has learning issues and with the specialists' cuts she is worried about her. All of the teachers have been working diligently on the distance learning for their students and spoke to the additional hours that are being put in, they could not do this without the technology specialists, and many are now being cut. With the unknown of what school will be like in the fall she would anticipate these technology specialists will be even more important. She understands the difficulty the Town Council Finance Committee is going through and appreciates being able to speak at this time. She requested the \$500,000 be put back into the budget, it will help. Trumbull schools have a wonderful reputation and doesn't want that to change.

20. Erin Rooney of 8 Great Brook Road grew up in Trumbull is a parent and a teacher in town. She asked that the 3% budget be restored and the \$500,000 be added back. This won't solve all of the financial problems but it will soften the blow during these trying times. Her children are successful at Daniels Farm School because of the many resources available to them on both ends of the spectrum. At the middle school the loss of specialists and interventionists will be detrimental to all of the students. Students will be coming back in the fall with greater needs both academic and social and emotional. This would not be in the best interest of our children.

21. Mike Buswell of 94 Gray Rock Road read his abbreviated email to the Town Council into the record: "As public elected officials please consider this email. I am a town business owner, I pay taxes on my home and also on my business, my wife is a Trumbull public school teacher and I am the proud father of two and a future third child in the Trumbull school system. I write in hopes that the Trumbull Town Council will reinstate the \$500,000 in support of the 3% increase in the 2021 school year. I implore you to please reconsider and hope you see now the BOE cuts will be catastrophic to our town's education system. While I understand raising taxes during a time like this is very unpopular I can assure you that a small raise in taxes would enable the teachers of the Trumbull public school system to continue to provide an outstanding education to the children in Trumbull. Please accept this as his personal opinion as a community member who is disheartened our town has been put in this position but not surprised how we got here. This situation is after many years of never fully funding and investing in our educational pre-K-12. When people operate on this budget my response is always we will continue to be here and not be able to give our kids the education they deserve because we are getting undercut. Our town leaders are constantly wanting more but don't provide the resource to support those lofty expectations. We have outdated programs for our students and they will never be able stand up to the tests that newer educations and technologies offered. What research supports is that all reading concerns magically disappears in 5<sup>th</sup> grade is incorrect, but the budget cuts will no longer fund reading specialists in 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade. Teacher have outdated materials and lack of support, but our town wants to provide more and keep up with Fairfield County. I unfortunately find this to be ignorant and laughable. I also can't understand when the BOF publically wants to support and fund the BOE and our town's goals but when in all honesty they did not. Cutting another \$500,000 to attempt to place the burden on the teachers is wrong in his opinion. Wanting teachers to just give back the better good is not fair to the educator. They should not bear the brunt of poor fiscal management. The teachers are the reason

why our education is where it is. At the same time the community should know this will devalue our homes, there is no secret that the reason people purchase homes in this community is for the education system. If our education system crumbles our home values will fall 15-20%. We will be under water in our homes glaring at a shattered public school system and at the same time possibly be sending our kids to private schools. My message will be enjoy the new Trumbull because we just crippled our community with this budget. Without a fully funded and supported budget we will not be able to attract young families to the town. I appreciate everyone's time and wants to keep Trumbull above board, he is a proud resident, a proud public and alumni of the system and would love for you guys to understand.

22. Ursala Demartino of 14 Argus Drive - The Chair read into the record Ms. Demartino's comments as follows: "I am a Trumbull resident at 14 Argus lane. I beg you to restore the budget".
23. Shannon Sampar stated she is a proud teacher at Booth Hill School and grew up in Trumbull but lives in Fairfield now. She spoke on behalf of the teachers in Trumbull at the elementary level all the way up to the high school. What people don't understand now is the complex diversity that teachers face in the classroom. Students of all different levels. She does have a sister who went through the Trumbull public schools with severe special needs. Her parents were very happy, she graduated and were so pleased. The reason she thrived was because of the services and specialists that Trumbull had provided. The budget cuts propose to cut para professionals in kindergarten, special education programs to be phased out, reading consultants, math specialists and technology specialists. This will be a disservice to students that are receiving intervention services and special education students. She asked that the budget be restored so these services are not cut and classroom teachers can receive what the need. Please restore the budget. She loves Trumbull and working there.
24. Sarah Goepfrich of 105 Saxony Drive extended her gratitude for the committee's service, there are a lot of difficult choices for the town. She is a parent, a taxpayer and an educator in town. When her husband and she were looking for a place to settle in, they are both from N.Y., they considered many towns in the area but settled on Trumbull because of the excellent school system and asked that the \$500,000 be restored. These cuts will have long term impacts on our students as well as our home values. There is a lot of uncertainty in the coming school year, we need resources in special ed to support students in need. We know students are going to come back with a greater variety of needs than before. Cutting emotional and social support for students coming back as well as the academic support is short sided. Clearly not in the best interest of the students, teachers or the Town. She understands the Council has no control over the individual line items but without the fund the BOE will have to make those cuts.
25. Jessica of 147 Putting Green Road has lived in Town for a long time and also has taught in town for over 20 years. She retired two years ago. Two of her children went through the system. She supported all those that had previously spoken and agrees with the comments they made. She believes the Committee is quite aware of everything they

heard at this meeting and believes if they can they will restore the \$500,000 plus. She wants the Committee to ask themselves in 6-12 months from now would you say we never should have restored the money or would they say we did the right thing. That should be the basis of the decision. We have little control at the federal level, so little at the state level but this is in our control. She thanked them for their time and their service to the town.

26. Sandra Kazinski of 91 Aspen Lane is a parent in town for ten years and has served on the PTA in the past. She requested that the necessary funding be restored to the budget. When they moved to town their biggest decision was based on the quality of the schools. The list of non-renewals, reassignments is unacceptable and detrimental to the children of all age groups as well as the cuts to reading, mathematics, technology and paraprofessionals. Especially after coming out of a state of quarantine. The paras are going to be needed more than ever to help transition. This holds true for all the specialists. Parents are doing the best they can to guide their children through online learning. However we are not educators the children will have a difficult time catching up when they return, this makes the cuts illogical. The kids will need more than ever. Losing 3 teachers at Daniels Farm School will be detrimental to an already crowded school that continues to expand. The pandemic has significantly hit Trumbull families. This is a hard pill to swallow and asked how the children are going to deliver stellar performance without the resources. It imperative the Town, BOE and the First Selectman do the right thing to keep our education system intact. We need all the funding we can salvage to keep our education system together or we will suffer. She asked that the \$500,000 be restored.
27. Carly Wolfe 251 Mayfield Drive is a teacher at Jane Ryan Elementary School and is coming to the end of her 4<sup>th</sup> year with the district. She is proud to be a teacher and is fortunate her position has not been cut for next year however many of her colleagues have received notification of such. It's disheartening that overnight they have been turned into what some are calling super heroes and are losing their positions during this crisis. Teachers are working harder than ever because we know the students and their families need us in the time of great uncertainty. If the town wants to see them continue to thrive it is imperative that teachers receive support. Reinstating the \$500,000 will not be a cure but will be a great assistance in ensuring the educational and emotional success of the teachers and students. Cutting teachers hurts not just the teachers but the students who are the future of this community and our world.
28. Peter Savage of Plymouth Avenue is a parent, voter and taxpayer who believes the proposed cuts are unacceptable. Trumbull had a great reputation for its school system. Let's take the town that people want to move to, to buy houses and want to enroll their kids in the schools and let's start chipping away at it. As a parent of children in the system let's look at what the cuts would do to a family like his. His children wouldn't have been in band, TAG, cub scouts, Spanish class and would have suffered with high out balance teacher-student ratios with no paras for kindergarteners. Let's see all these cuts and see how happy we are in the next election cycle and see how many people want to move to Trumbull like he and wife did 7 years after growing up in Norwalk. Most

likely the next group of families will skip over Trumbull and go somewhere else and see if any of us will be able to sell our house in a number of years. He urged the Committee to fully fund the BOE \$500,000 and beyond.

(Donna Seidell, Alternate joined the public hearing at 11:04 a.m.)

29. Lisa Zietlinski of 9 Surrey Lane extended her gratitude for their volunteerism and knows they are working hard on this problem. She and her family have been residents for 20 years. She quoted Christopher Reeve, "A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles." Her husband and she intentionally chose to raise their family here because of the schools and education experience for their children. In order to maintain the quality of schools and stay competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to continue to attract new residents we must continually innovate and improve our educational offerings not decimate them. She strongly urged the \$500,000 and beyond be reinstated especially because of the current health crisis. Personnel cuts will increase the social and emotional impacts on all of the children. Without the proper supports in place especially the 25.4 teaching positions, including 3 technology specialists, para professionals, 26 kindergarten para-professionals, reduction of math and reading specialists will undoubtedly increase class sizes and provide less opportunities for the children's needs to be met. As a distance teacher she is on a daily basis experiencing the psychological stresses of the students and families. This Committee has a unique opportunity during this unprecedented time to become the transformational and proactive leaders who can devise a plan where all stake holders to fully fund what is most important for our town, our future and children. She ended with a quote from Albert Einstein, "In the middle of difficulty lies an opportunity."
30. Danielle Dunleavey of 73 Greenbrier Road is the PTA president at Daniels Farm School extended her gratitude to the Committee for their volunteerism. She requested consideration to restore the budget to 3%. She has young children at the schools and their education is at risk, the future of education in Trumbull is something you can impact. It is not just a line item it is an investment.
31. Jess Cintron Henry of 137 Cottage Street thanked the Committee for their service and knows that it feels like an impossible situation. She requested the \$500,000 be restored. She is an educator and a parent who works in a nearby district as a counselor. With all of the distance learning she could speak as parent and educator to the current impact this pandemic is having on our students is large scale. Next year they will need more support not less. We are losing the college and career counselor at the High School which is a huge loss and will cause a negative ripple effect on the counselors at the high school and students their as a whole. She implored the Committee not to place the burden of this budget mismanagement on the educators and ask them to fund the gap when they had no role in creating it. As a taxpayer she would support a raise in taxes if it was going to fully fund the educational system. The \$500,000 will not solve all the problems but it will help. Our kids deserve all the help they can get.

32. Jonathon Kinne of 106 Colony Avenue and his wife are educators and have been for 15 years. The first part of their career they lived in NJ. They moved to Trumbull 1.5 years ago because of the school system. They left careers to find a better life in Trumbull. They experienced budget cuts first hand in 2008 in NJ and watched their towns and school system decline and would hate to see that happen here. Good people and teachers will leave. The decline happens overtime. We must invest in our schools and community.
33. Kelly Kimberly of 24 Tungsten Circle is an educator in town. 40 years ago her parents moved here for the education system, she grew up here and went to the schools, all of her friends who graduated with her have gone onto to college and have phenomenal careers. She is a parent whose children attend the school system. She worries for them and her students. She is beyond emotion, if you could see how much they do for their students and how much they care about them and to see to see their future slipping away because of the cuts. A teacher can only do so much, and to see the loss of her colleagues and children's teachers is upsetting and hopes that the Committee understands that many of us chose to come back here to raise their kids. That is not what will happen now, people will want to get out of Trumbull. She is scared for the future.
34. Sophia Cariello of 52 Russ Road and has been in Trumbull for 13 years and is also a product of Trumbull public schools and also an educator in a nearby town. She loved her teachers who were fundamental in her success and is why she decided to raise her family here. She requested and supports full funding of the budget to retain teachers.
35. Suzanne Scanlon of 26 Jerome thanked the Committee for their service. She has been a teacher in the school system for 21 years and her children have all gone through the school system. She has also been a resident for 53 plus years. She is proud to be part of the school system. Her thoughts have been for her children and students, their lives have been in a complete upheaval since COVID-19. They have loss connections with friends and relatives, faculty, coaches and community. They have been isolated. She worries about them returning to school whether it be distance learning or at the school. To come back and not see familiar faces will be more stressful for them. To take care of our kids this may be the one force we can control. Most people don't realize that our math/reading specialists and technology integrationists have supported and put together and planned the distance learning. To return in the fall without this support will affect the children and their learning. She is proud to be a teacher in town and asked to keep their school families intact, the students need it.
36. Richard Seltenoid of 17 Carriage Drive is a teacher at the Trumbull schools. He has a colleague whose enthusiasm is second to none and has had an impact on his daughter, she is a favorite and shares so many of the qualities of our favorite teachers over the years. Her lessons are engaging and enthusiasm is contagious. His daughter and all of her students have been given confidence so they could shine as learners. Through her work she has enhanced their understanding of the social sciences, she puts the priorities of her students as number one, and has helped them succeed not only in academics but in life. This particular teacher received one of the pink slips. He hopes we can continue to support the funding of the Trumbull Public Schools.

37. Jennifer Burke of 40 High Ridge Road thanked them for their service and consideration of the budget. She is a parent of children in the school system and is an educator in a neighboring town. She understands we are doing all we can with what we have and that we are in uncharted waters and don't know what the future will bring. She implored the Committee to restore the First Selectwoman's budget. Every little bit will make a difference to the students, teachers and town population. Our budget was suffering before the pandemic, if this money isn't restored now where will be next year? There is nothing left to scrape off the bone. Because we don't know what the future holds we need to be prepared to support our students and staff in every way possible. There will be greater skill discrepancies in the students based on their crisis learning circumstance, not to mention the emotional tolls. Reasonable class sizes, specialists, para-professionals and mental health support staff will be imperative. The BOF has said that people in Town struggle to pay their taxes due to the pandemic, this may be true but we should not take more away from these children and in the end the caliber the school system does improve the economic situation of all residents. The expression, "penny wise and pound foolish" comes to mind. We may cut specialists now and those students may need to be referred into special education which is much more costly. Cutting clubs and freshman sports could leave students with empty afternoons getting into trouble leading to negatively impacted graduation rates. Her children have watched her participate in the budget process this year both of them have shed tears over the idea that their para and specialists may not be there in the future. She and her husband worry about the education system in this town. We are all doing what we can with best of the current education situation and asked that the First Selectman's budget be restored and quoted the mission statement, "Meet the educational needs of all students within a challenging and supportive academic environment, that empowers each student to become a life-long learner and to participate in a democratic and diverse global society.
38. Ellen K and her husband of 7 August Lane moved here 3 years ago and have no children, they were drawn here by grandchildren and have been fascinated by their education so far. Her stepchildren moved here from other areas to engage in the Trumbull educational system. As a grandparent she implored the Committee to bring the money back into the budget and restore it to 3%.
39. Tammy Russo of 76 Stoneleigh Road thanked the Council for their service, appreciates their support and allowing them to speak. She asked that they restore the \$500,000 and although they don't have the control on the cuts, the money restored will help bring back some of the proposed cuts. Next year will be her 20<sup>th</sup> year, 15 of which she has been employed by the Trumbull Public Schools. She has been a resident for 16 plus years and her love for the town runs deep. The proposed cuts including teachers, tech specialists and paras are difficult to grasp. She fears this will paralyze where she works and the entire system for years to come. This reduction and impact will be felt on many levels, the students', the classrooms' and the schools' level. With this cut 30 students will not be seen for small group instruction, over the course of the week that's 2.5 hours of less targeted instruction and 40 less hours in a month. These are students that through intervention often end up thriving and reaching grade level expectations and often times

exit the program. Students without this could easily wind up with larger deficiencies in reading which will impact other areas that could end up needing support in the special education setting which is already so full and costly. Those same children will need to be the focus of the teacher in the classroom they will not be able to be double dipped which will not enable those teachers to develop the skills of the rest of the learners in the classroom. She doesn't envy the balancing act that will be necessary to give all learners what they need which is their teacher's time. In addition interventionists wear many hats which will no longer happen. There simply won't be the manpower and will change the landscape of the school, community, flow and added spark. That is one school in one year's time, multiply that effect to the other 5 elementary schools and the outcome will be disastrous in one year, never mind the lasting effects for years through middle and high school. She is concerned and frightened for her students, school and town. Trumbull educators have crafted plans, utilizes resources and have come up with crafty ways that already do more with less. They expect success and produce it because they are masters at fostering it. She is aware this illustration doesn't mention how this will affect our property taxes, reputations, and the emotional stress for the struggling students. For this reason she is asking the budget be restored.

40. Rachele Giordano of 11 Windhall Lane thanked the Council for hearing all of their comments and for those that responded to her email. She echoed the concerns of other residents and the passion she heard. It makes her proud to be a Trumbull resident and recognizes the Council members are also passionate about what they're doing and the decisions they are making. She is a parent, one of their teachers is on the list of cuts, who is a standout educator like many of those on the list. She goes above and beyond and that is the type of teacher our current system attracts and is afraid we are sending a message that our education system isn't as important. We will lose these critical people, like her child's teacher who has done so much for them during this emotional time. She asked that the Committee restore to the 3% that the First Selectman proposed, that \$500,000 could save her or another important educator.
41. Rachel Dustin of 275 Lawrence Road is a parent and is a teacher in town. She thanked the Committee for their time and service. She like many others chose to move to Trumbull for the school system both for her family and her career. In March she wrote about her experience of teaching in a poor performance town in the past and the negative effects on the students and the quality of education for the teachers and administration. It showed in the performance in the schools. Without intervention and tiers of service, early intervention will not be available for our struggling learners as a result the students will fall further behind each year. When this happens all will want answers and solutions to help the child. Children will be brought for testing and more students will be brought into special education which has huge costs for a town. Our test scores will decline as we are not enriching students who are on or above grade level benchmarks. Declining test scores will reflect upon the town. It's a district known for its excellence and is one of our greatest assets. She is friendly with many young families who also purchased their first homes in this community to provide their children with an outstanding education. This reputation will slip from us with the proposed cuts. These cuts would be unacceptable in a regular school year but as you know we are facing so many new challenges during

COVID-19. The hardest part is yet to come this fall. We will need to educate our children by continuing social distancing protocols and provide them with review, enrichment and interventions that will be necessary to get us all back on track. This is an overwhelming task and we will need all the support and the town's resources. Restoring the \$500,000 will not restore everything that we need, she will continue to work long hours over her contracted hours and spend her own money like every year because that is what teachers do, but she will never stop fighting for the children and asked to band their ranks and join together. This is her craft, career, her talent and passion. She gets emotional because as a parent and a teacher she will never stop fighting for the kids because they are our future.

The Chair stated their next meeting is Tuesday May 19, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. where this Committee will make their recommendation to the full Council and on Thursday, May 21, 2020 the full Town Council will vote. The BOF will set the mill rate on June 5, 2020. The Chair stated they appreciated all of the participants who voiced their opinion and took time today. They know they have a difficult job and are taking it seriously as does the BOF and First Selectman Tesoro. There are many moving parts and are trying to do the best we can for the good of all.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:37 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Margaret D. Mastroni  
Town Council Clerk