

Town of Hampton
Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
May 13, 2020
7:00 PM
Zoom Meeting

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM.

Roll Call/Seating of Alternates: Lisa Sanchez, Kathy Donahue, Diane Gagnon, Perry Matchinis, Ed Adelman, Nick Brown, Kathy Newcombe and Stan Crawford.

Staff and Others Present: Selectman Bob Grindle, Treasurer Ellen Rodriguez, Hampton Elementary School Board Chairman Rose Bisson, Superintendent Frank Olah, Business Coordinator Sally Lehoux, and members Mark Becker, Maryellen Donnelly and Juan Arriola, Recording Clerk Dayna McDermott-Arriola.

Chairman Sanchez reviewed the ground rules developed for the conduct of meetings via Zoom. She announced that the Board of Finance's email, BOF@hamptonct.org, is functioning and that the board received seven communications from citizens. She suggested that members listen to these first, followed by comments from the many citizens in attendance.

Motion: Kathy Donahue, seconded by Perry Matchinis, to move Correspondences from Item 7 to Item 3.
In Favor: Lisa Sanchez, Kathy Donahue, Ed Adelman, Diane Gagnon, Perry Matchinis
Opposed: Nick Brown
Motion carried, 5-0.

Correspondence: Chairman Sanchez read into the record communications (attached) from the following citizens: Dayna Arriola who spoke in support of multi-aged groupings; and Myra Evans, Stephanie Bayne, Glen & Candace Morrell, Joy Becker, John Tillinghast, Kate Donnelly & Clay Colt, and Joan Fox, who spoke in support of the elementary school budget's 3.99% increase.

Citizen Comments:

Marlise Thomen spoke in support of the elementary school's budget proposal, noting the need for qualified teachers particularly during the pandemic.

Jason Lathrop stated that taxes could be raised, or fees for the transfer station increased, to fund the elementary school budget.

Linda Fasake, in her support for the elementary school budget, criticized what she termed the "constant fight for education" in the town.

Shannon Haddad praised the elementary school teachers for dealing with distance learning and recommended that, due to these circumstances, no dramatic changes should occur this year.

Kathy Freed sent a message stating that families don't move to Hampton due to the lack of support for the local schools.

Juan Arriola read into the record a letter challenging the need for a 3.99% increase during the current economic crisis (attached).

Chairman Sanchez thanked all the speakers for their comments.

The Board recessed at 7:59PM. The meeting reconvened at 8:04PM.

Approval of Minutes of April 8, 2020 Regular Meeting

Motion: Kathy Donahue, seconded by Ed Adelman, to approve the Minutes of the April 8, 2020 Regular Meeting. Motion carried unanimously, Diane Gagnon abstaining.

Approval of Minutes of April 29, 2020 Special Meeting: tabled.

Reports/Actions

First Selectman: First Selectman was not yet present.

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Perry Matchinis, to move this item to the end of the Agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

Tax Collector: none.

Treasurer: The Treasurer requested three transfers.

Motion: Kathy Donahue, seconded by Perry Matchinis, to approve the following transfers: \$184 to 6004 Town Counsel from 7000 Contingency; \$49 to 6009-04 Election Supplies from 6009-01 Election Registrar Pay; \$270 to 6013-17 Community Center Supplies from 6013-15 Community Center Cleaning; \$2219 to 6100-10 Building Inspector Clerk from 6100-11 Fire Dept. Volunteer Incentive. Motion carried unanimously.

Boards of Education

Regional District #11: Kathy Donahue reported that the budget the RD#11 Board of Education approved represents a \$16,720 increase for our town's assessment despite a decrease of two students from Hampton. Ed Adelman reported that 58 students from Hampton attend Parish Hill Middle/High School.

Hampton Elementary School: Chairman Bisson reported that unexpected special education costs totaling \$144,000 resulted in the 3.99% increase to the school's budget. She stated that the school is working toward multi-aged groupings, but that the school community is not yet ready for full implementation. In response to a question on combining grades for art, music, media and physical education, she said that State law only allows for grades to be grouped together when they are combined for regular instruction, which, thus far, they are not.

Board of Finance Committees:

Human Resource Committee: Kathy Donahue provided the information requested at the last meeting: the duties of Scotland's Treasurer, a Certified Public Accountant who earns \$15,300 per year, are shared with a bookkeeper, who earns \$10,200 annually. Neither position includes health benefits. She reiterated her belief that, due to the economic situation, potential salary adjustments should not be made this year. Chairman Sanchez agreed, elaborating on some of the economic difficulties both the Town and families are facing. Ms. Donahue advocated limiting raises to a cost-of-living increase, which is 1.6%, for all employees and suggested discussions occur at a budget workshop session. Nick Brown agreed to postpone decisions until the session.

Old Business:

- a. **Review Rates of Certificates of Deposit:** By general consent it was agreed, based on the rates provided by Treasurer Rodriguez, that monies should remain in the Town's Short Term Investment Fund which currently yields the highest rate.
- b. **Discuss Alternate Meeting Dates and Times:** Kate Donnelly, Chairman of the Green Energy Committee, stated that she was disappointed that the Board of Finance scheduled their monthly meetings at the same time that Green Energy has been meeting for over a decade; however she agreed to ask her membership at their next meeting of the possibility of changing their monthly meeting dates.
- c. **Discuss Board of Finance Access to Town Website:** Chairman Sanchez reported that the board has no access to their page on the Town's website. Kathy Donahue stated that she has volunteered her sons' assistance in resolving this issue, as residents report having difficulty accessing information. As members spoke positively of the template for Chaplin's Board of Finance, which is also serviced by the same computer technician, Ed Adelman suggested that

the technician be asked to replicate Chaplin's template for Hampton's Board of Finance. Mr. Adelman also spoke to the importance of improving accessibility promptly to facilitate the participation of taxpayers during this budget cycle. Nick Brown suggested the issue be addressed during the Special Meeting. Selectman Grindle agreed to assist in the process of accessing the website.

New Business:

- a. **Discuss and Possibly Act on Town Government Budget:** Chairman Sanchez reported that the Board has received no direction from the State or Town officials with respect to facilitating the Public Hearing which should accommodate the Town's 1300 taxpayers. By general consent, it was agreed to discuss the Government Budget during the Special Meeting. Treasurer Rodriguez stated that the current draft is posted on the Town website. Perry Matchinis requested that it be forwarded to members.
- b. **Discuss and Possibly Act on Elementary School Budget:** Kathy Donahue reviewed information obtained from the school, including the Superintendent's response to anticipated savings, expenses, and State grants. Superintendent Olah stated that revenue from grants is not included in the budget.

The Board recessed at 9:02PM; the Meeting convened at 9:08PM.

Though Nick Brown objected to discussing revenue and the Minimum Budget Requirement instead of the budget the school board adopted, Kathy Donahue defended the relevance of this information in budget discussions. According to the information she distributed, the MBR is \$3,399,852 for the district, with a \$55,596 reduction in the Education Cost Sharing grant and a \$136,414 reduction due to a drop in student population. Perry Matchinis stated that he was vacillating between a 0% increase and an amount which would compensate for the decrease in the ECS grant. Members discussed the uncertainties of accruing additional expenses in order to follow potential social distancing guidelines when school resumes. Kathy Donahue recommended contacting the Office of Policy and Management to ascertain whether or not funds from the CNR accounts can be applied to funding Executive Order directives.

Ms. Donahue reported that the ratio of certified staff to students is 8:1, and the ratio of instructional staff to students is 4.5: 1, though the State average is 12:1. Kathi Newcombe stated that Hampton's per pupil expenditure is the 8th highest in State spending, though the Town ranks 108th in wealth. Perry Matchinis reported that the Full Time Equivalent positions for 2001, as reported by the school to the State Department of Education, were 25.8 for a population of 182 students; and in 2018-2019, the FTE was 26.5 for a student population of 90. Superintendent Olah explained that, though the total employees may be the same, situations are different, using as an example that two students are serviced with two paraprofessionals each; Chairman Bisson explained that this arrangement is less expensive than the alternative, tuitioning the students to a special school.

Kathy Donahue questioned classroom configurations. Chairman Bisson explained that students in different grades are not together for instruction in reading, math, and language arts. She will look into combining classes for specials, such as music and physical education. Chairman Sanchez said she was perplexed as to why groupings were prescribed by grade level, stating that there is a span of abilities whether there are single or multiple grades. Chairman Bisson stated that, though the school is evolving toward multi-grade classrooms, they are not there yet. Ed Adelman said that he trusted the opinions of those with the most knowledge regarding the school and asked whether or not there was consensus among them;

Chairman Bisson said that many discussions revealed many different opinions, and that she did not agree with many of those expressed by many of the citizens who spoke at the meeting. In response to Chairman Sanchez's question, Chairman Bisson affirmed that the staff received professional development for multi-aged groupings, and that new teachers are only considered if they view multi-aged groupings with enthusiasm.

To Kathy Donahue's question, Superintendent Olah replied that the increase is due to the tuition and transportation for a special education student. He affirmed Ms. Donahue's question that staffing with a 0% increase would involve one teacher per multi-grade team and one additional teacher to provide SRBI services in each of those classrooms. Superintendent Olah confirmed Perry Matchinis' assumption that since the salary of a retiring teacher approximates the \$83,000 increase, the school plans on replacing the retiring teacher. To Nick Brown's question on whether the costs for the four paraprofessionals servicing the two special education students, and the tuition and transportation for the outplaced special education student, resulted in cuts to regular education, Superintendent Olah responded that these and further cuts would come from regular education, however he cautioned against blaming special education students for difficult budget decisions. Chairman Sanchez thanked him for the statement, expressing concern that several speakers framed the situation that way.

The Board recessed at 9:57PM; the Meeting reconvened at 10:02PM.

Kathy Donahue cautioned that State revenue will continue to decrease, particularly with the economic realities that are predicting a \$2 billion State deficit which will have an effect on the grant revenue received from the State. She asked the Board of Education to look at scheduling and rethink their spending plan. Kathy Newcombe spoke of the financial impact of the pandemic, specifically an additional 20% reduction in State funding. She noted that the government is acknowledging the difficulties families are facing with measures such as a three month delay in paying federal and local taxes, and stated that this year, as there are no town meetings or referenda, the Board of Finance is the last line of defense for taxpayers. She added that several surrounding towns are requiring 3% cuts for all departments and level spending plans.

Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Ed Adelman, to approve the Hampton Elementary School FY 2020-2021 Budget with a 3.99% increase at \$2,188,266.

Much discussion ensued. Diane Gagnon said she could not support an increase this year due to economic and educational uncertainties. Kathy Newcombe noted that if unanticipated expenses occur, the Board of Education can return to the Board of Finance to request additional funding. Due to the economic issues facing residents, the town and the state, Perry Matchinis stated that he would speak for the other 1,100 voters who were not present at the meeting and who have, for several years, consistently voted against any increase to the elementary school budget. Ed Adelman noted that the Town has many different constituents, several of whom support education. Chairman Sanchez stated that she took offense at the notion that those who oppose an increase in the budget do not support education. She noted that for the past decade, taxpayers have only approved an increase once. She reminded members that the school board Chairman identified multi-aged groupings as the best educational model for the elementary school, and noted that research a previous school board relied on explained the necessity of peer groups big enough for every child to find their place. Kathy Donahue stated that all taxpayers support education on a local, state and federal level, adding that several residents privately expressed their current economic struggles to her. Kathi Newcombe noted that taxpayer support for education is evident in the \$25,640 per-pupil expenditures, stating that the State average is \$17,438. Nick Brown countered that the

town is spending less on education than was spent in 2012-2013, and stated that families are leaving because they feel the town is not spending enough on education. Kathy Donahue listed some of the other reasons why people leave the town, and asked to call the vote.

In Favor: Nick Brown, Ed Adelman

Opposed: Kathy Donahue, Perry Matchinis, Diane Gagnon, Lisa Sanchez
Motion failed, 2-4.

Motion: Perry Matchinis, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to approve a \$2,104,318 budget for the Hampton Elementary School for FY2020-2021, which represents a 0% increase.

In Favor: Kathy Donahue, Perry Matchinis, Diane Gagnon, Lisa Sanchez

Opposed: Ed Adelman, Nick Brown.

Motion carried, 4-2.

- c. **Review 5-Year Plan:** Kathy Donahue reminded members that the 5-Year Plan is approved at the Annual Town Meeting in order for the Town to accept State Funds. Selectman Grindle said that the plan is intact and that a Town meeting was planned for later in the year when allowable. Ms. Donahue said that the Town would have to ascertain whether or not approval was required prior to the close of the fiscal year, as well as the method for approving it.
- d. **Discuss and Possibly Act on Setting Finance Board Public Hearing Date:** Statutory timelines and those established in the By-Laws were reviewed. Selectman Grindle said that the time frame for setting the mill rate to in order to send tax bills has not yet been discussed with the Tax Collector's Office.
Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to hold a Special Budget Workshop Meeting on May 20 at 7PM. After discussion, Nick Brown amended his motion as follows:
Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Kathy Donahue, to hold a Special Budget Workshop Meeting on May 20 at 6PM. Motion carried unanimously.
Motion: Nick Brown, seconded by Diane Gagnon, to hold the Public Hearing on the FY2020-2021 Town Government and Hampton Elementary School Budgets on June 10 at 7PM. Motion carried unanimously.
- e. **Discuss and Possibly Act on Setting Date for Approval of FY2020-2021 Town Government and Elementary School Budgets:** The date for Final Approval of the Budgets will be determined after the scheduled Meeting(s).
- f. **Discuss and Possible Act on Setting Date for Setting the Mill Rate for FY2020-2021:** The date for setting the mill rate will be determined after the Public Hearing.
- g. **Appoint Town Auditor:** Kathi Newcombe stated that the prior Auditor presented the Annual Audit to the Board of Finance every year. She also questioned why there is no contract filed at Town Hall. Perry Matchinis said that he has the contract and that presentations are part of it. Treasurer Rodriguez stated that she would ask the Auditor to present the Audit to the Board of Finance; Kathy Donahue suggested that a signed contract should be available at Town Hall.
Motion: Kathy Donahue, seconded by Nick Brown, to appoint Stephen Hopkins as the Town Auditor. Motion carried unanimously, Perry Matchinis abstaining.

Additions to Agenda:

Motion: Perry Matchinis, seconded by Kathy Donahue, to approve the dairy tax abatement for the Woodmansee Farm as required by statute.

As precise information on the amount of the reduction was not available, by general consent it was agreed to table discussion until documentation was provided, and Mr. Matchinis withdrew his motion.

The Board recessed at 11:08PM. The Meeting reconvened at 11:12PM.

Citizen Comments:

Joy Becker stated that she came from New York where they value education and school budgets were always passed on the first attempt. She questioned the Town’s priorities and why the Town has a Board of Education if the Board of Finance makes final decisions.

Mark Becker challenged the members to find a Connecticut school with a lower spending plan than Hampton’s. He said that lots of finance board members lack educational expertise, that they should be ashamed of themselves for placing the burden of the pandemic on children’s shoulders, and expressed his hope that members “lose sleep and are sick”.

Chairman Sanchez reminded everyone of the Ground Rules which dictate civility and respect.

Stacey (no surname provided) expressed her hope that the finance board members listen to citizens at the Public Hearing. To her question, Chairman Sanchez responded that residents can be placed on the Town’s email list for notifications of meetings by contacting the Selectmen’s Administrative Assistant.

Suggestions for Next Agenda:

Town Government Budget

Members should contact Chairman Sanchez, Vice-Chairman Donahue, or Recording Clerk Dayna Arriola with suggestions for the Agenda

Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting: Special Meeting on May 20, 2020 at 6PM.

Adjournment:

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:19PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dayna McDermott Arriola
Recording Clerk

This is a draft version of the Minutes until approved by the Board of Finance.

ATTACHMENTS:

To the Members of the Board of Finance:

I believe I have a responsibility to speak to the issue of multi-grade groupings because I was a strong and vocal advocate on the ground floor years ago. This approach was a response to classrooms of seven to ten students. This is unhealthy for a variety of reasons.

My opinion was based on experience. I taught a combined class of 18 – 26, 4th and 5th graders, who not only exhibited the usual range of abilities, but who had been exposed to the English language anywhere from 5 minutes to 5 years, with only the support of a part-time paraprofessional, for all but my last two years of teaching. I wouldn’t advocate for multi-aged groupings if I didn’t know for certain that they could yield excellent results.

I question how much time the students are actually grouped together at all, since for music, art, gym, health, and media they're separate, and I believe, because of the insistence on maintaining two teachers in every team, this is occurring through the course of the rest of the day, negating the reason they were grouped together in the first place.

Hampton is not blessed with a racially diverse population. But there are opportunities to promote diversity, and age is one. I only hear the negatives of multi-aged groupings and not the positives. There are several. Children learn best when they learn from one another, and especially when they bring to the table diverse views, abilities, experiences, and interests.

Respectfully,

Dayna Arriola

I am a concerned parent writing this in regards to the HES school budget for 2020/2021. I am in favor of the budget increase of 3.99%. I feel as though our children are at stake of losing what's best of their education! Our children whom will be leaders and making decisions for us in our future deserve the best education possible to them. HES has already been in a situation that isn't working for our students, having no SRBI support was and is a huge loss for these kids. For a small town with many students whom require special education it is only fair to give them what they all need! Times change and things are costing more for students to have that education and increasing the budget will get these students what they are entitled to by law!! It is against the law to not provide these services for these students that they need!! If these cuts continue to hurt these students it will eventually hurt this town as well. Think of the future of all these students and do what's best for them, providing them with the budget increases so they can have what's entitled to them for a great education. I find all the staff at HES to be extremely supportive and encouraging to all of these students. I support paying a slight increase in taxes to provide an amazing education for my kids and all the other students at HES!

Thank you, Myra Evans
119 Main St Hampton CT 06247

To the Hampton Board of Finance;

I'm very concerned that reducing the HES budget will adversely affect our town's children and families. This especially true during the current challenges of distance learning. I see how hard the teachers are working every day with my two granddaughters, Their dedication and creativity are amazing, but its nothing like being in the classroom with a child. There will be a lot of catching up needed when school starts again and I'm especially concerned about children who need extra help. The State mandates SRBI support for students falling behind in math and reading for good reason. If any teachers are cut, there won't be anyone qualified to provide this much needed, state required support.

A 0% school budget increase as well as further reductions, will jeopardize our children's futures by forcing teacher cuts. We need to provide excellent quality, solidly supported education for all our Hampton students. The HES budget as presented will result in a .57mil increase which is \$57/\$100,000 of property

value. Even as a senior citizen with a limited income, I see a .57mil increase as more than fair and reasonable.

Please carefully and thoughtfully consider the effects cutting the HES budget will have on our children and families. Just because you can make cuts, doesn't mean you have to, or that you should.

Thank you,
Stephanie W. Bayne
127 Windy Hill Road
Glenn & Candace Morell 67 Bennett Drive Hampton, CT 06247 May 11, 2020
Dear Members of the Hampton Board of Finance,

I present this communication to the board of finance as a community member, parent and educator. I write to express my family's full support for the 20-21 Board of Education budget that reflects a 3.99% increase in funding to appropriately program for the breadth of needs at Hampton Elementary School. I present this communication to the board of finance committee members as I am aware that the board of finance has entertained discussion of passing a 0% increase with an additional recommendation to further reduce the budget by an additional \$55,000. Should you choose to approve a 0% increase with an additional \$55,000 reduction, two classroom teachers and one bus route will be eliminated. This translates to combined classes in grades 1&2, 3&4, and 5&6 as well as increased transportation times for students. While I am aware that changes in the minimum budget requirements (MBR) has made this possible for this budget year, it is a terrible decision at the expense of our most precious population in a time when their world has been turned upside down. Since 2014, the school budget has incurred a consistent pattern by which the education budget has been annually reduced. We have whittled away any flexibility to provide needed specialized programming and instructional supports for at risk populations. In making these reductions over the long term we have forced an already small staff to make programming decisions based on ability to provide the service versus doing what is right for our children. It is time to stop this insanity and appropriately fund a school program so that teachers are able to do what is programmatically best for all students. So let's review a few of the school "requireds" that do not go away regardless of your committee's decision. State mandated Scientifically Researched Intervention Supports (SRBI). This support is mandated by the state for students lagging behind in math or reading. In years past, an interventionist would have provided this support. Through prior year budget reductions, this position was eliminated and now rests on the shoulders of classroom teachers. SRBI is required to be implemented by a certified teacher and there are specific requirements regarding the amount of intervention time each child receives based upon their individual level of need. For example, a child receiving Tier III intervention is expected to receive 30-45 minutes of individualized (1:1) instruction 3-4 times per week. The current 19-20 team model in grades 1-6 allows one grade level teacher opportunity to provide intervention while the other teacher provides instruction. I ask, how is this even going to be possible if we collapse all classes to a cross grade model? Conceptually to require a teacher to instruct two developmentally different ages groups and support the curriculum development and implementation requirements of these two different grade levels in addition to supporting the intervention needs of individual students is ludicrous. This task is physically impossible. Additionally the special education costs are expected to increase in the 20-21 school year by \$143,000. This is an increase required by law to provide appropriate services and support for identified populations. Next

year the preschool program will be the largest it has been in ten years. While the program is run through a state grant, the grant does not cover all operating expenses. The Board of Education must cover the additional costs. Next year there will be an \$18,000 increase over last year's budget. We should be celebrating our growing enrollment and not be penalized for it! What message do we send our families when we intentionally know this information and yet demand a greater than 0% decrease in school budget funding? I am also aware that as the nation continues to address the COVID 19 pandemic, guidance continues to be shared out via the Connecticut State Department of Education in regards to planning for school reopening in the fall. Have we taken a moment to consider that guidance most likely will require smaller class sizes and social distancing? How will we budget for those requirements if we strip the BOE budget of any flexibility? During this pandemic our teachers have done an exemplary job supporting synchronous and asynchronous learning models for our children. To underfund the budget that supports this deeply important work is morally and fiscally wrong. Now more than ever we need our building appropriately staffed with qualified teachers to do the important work of supporting our students and our families. Over the years as a taxpayer, I have supported town purchases that I might view as frivolous and unnecessary because I trusted that the town was making decisions in the best interest of our community needs. I am deeply concerned that the Board of Finance does not have that same respect and understanding for the recommendations made by the Board of Education. Annually the BOE presents to the Board of Finance a thoughtful budget that accurately reflects school budgetary needs. It is time that we support the school budget that accurately reflects the funding necessary to support strong programming for our HES students. We cannot endure another year of underfunding the school budget.

Candace Morell Parent, community member and educator who supports the 3.99% budget increase

May 12, 2020

158 Kenyon Rd.
Hampton, CT 06247

Dear Town of Hampton Board of Finance Members,

I am writing as a parent to express my concerns regarding possible cuts to the Hampton Elementary School budget. I urge you to consider the outcome of your actions and the impact it will have on the youngest members of this community.

We, the people, elected the members of the Board of Education to guide our small school in a direction that fosters educational and personal excellence. As an educator myself, I know that each and every student has a unique set of strengths and needs. There are times when the needs of certain students may be costly. It is our obligation as a community to support each and every student in our town. This may come in the form of extra support within the four walls of the school building or in some cases a placement outside of the traditional school. Once again, I mention this is a costly but necessary measure.

The Board of Education strives to save our town money without putting at risk the quality of education at Hampton Elementary School. The budget put forth is fiscally responsible and ensures that the needs of all the students will be met. Cuts to the proposed budget will negatively impact each and every student at Hampton Elementary School. In recent years, the position of a reading specialist and a math specialist have both been eliminated. Students needing extra support through SRBI (Student Researched Based Intervention) in math and/or reading now receive these services from the classroom teacher. The current team model used at HES allows time for direct instruction and additional support by the team teachers. If teaching positions are eliminated due to budget cuts, there simply will not be enough certified teachers on staff to provide the necessary support to students in need. Teachers will be asked to cover two different curriculums within one class. Not every subject area can be adapted and taught to two different grade levels at the same time. There are developmental milestones that children must reach in order to obtain mastery of certain skills.

The children of our community are the leaders of tomorrow. We need to provide them with the necessary tools to become kind, thoughtful and educated citizens. I urge you to keep the proposed budget and show the citizens of Hampton that you care about our future.

Thank you,

Joy Becker

May 11, 2020

149 Main Street
Hampton, Ct 06247

Hampton Bd of Finance

Dear Members,

As a retired special education teacher of 35 years, I urge your board not to cut this year's HES budget request. Even though the number of students in HES is small, the range of state mandated curriculum and individual student needs has not diminished.

The HES staff and Board of Education have responded to decreasing enrollment by combining two grades into each classroom. Simply looking at the number of students in each room underestimates the demands on a teacher in such a classroom. First, the teacher has to ensure the instruction of skills for two years of state curriculum. Second, the teacher must account for the wide range of ability levels in a classroom encompassing two grade levels. In such a

classroom that typically would span at least four grade levels of ability. Third, the teacher is responsible for assessing the skills of all students and providing instruction based on that assessment. What is a daunting job in a single grade classroom is only magnified in a multi grade classroom.

There is a saying in elementary education about treating your students fairly.

Fair instruction is not every student getting the same, but every student getting what they need.

Hampton Elementary School needs more than one certified teacher in each two-grade classroom if all of our students are to receive the education that they need and deserve. Keeping the HES budget the same or less, year after year, does not allow the town to fulfill its obligation of providing a free and quality education to all of its students. I urge you to leave this year's proposed budget for HES intact.

John Tillinghast

May 12, 2020

Dear Board of Finance Members,

As seniors who have lived in Hampton for over 35 years, we urge the Board of Finance to support the Hampton Board of Education budget as presented. The Board of Education has done a good job in balancing the needs of students, teachers and taxpayers. We support Hampton Elementary School and believe providing quality education to our students is fundamental to the survival and health of our town. Too many cuts to BOE budgets in recent years has put our school and the quality of education provided in jeopardy. Our three children went to HES and received an excellent education. We believe it is our obligation to provide the same excellent education to our current students. Our teachers are working hard to adapt to virtual teaching and we do not know what future demands will be made on them. We need a budget that provides adequate funding for our school and provides funding for enough teachers to properly educate our town's students. Some increases to the budget are beyond the control of the Board of Education, especially when it comes to special education costs. The budget as presented by the BOE would account for only .57 increase of the mill rate. Even though we are on a small fixed income, we think our students are worth that increase. We elected the Board of Education to work for us to understand the needs of Hampton Elementary School. They have done the work to prepare a budget based on the school and town's needs. The MBR is a guideline not a mandate; just because it is allowed cuts by the state does not mean it should be cut. Let's not drive young families out of our community, without them we will not be able to continue as a viable town. The needs of our students should come first; they are the future of our town and country and it is our duty to provide

them with the teachers and resources that they need. Please do not cut the budget for the Board of Education.

Sincerely, Kate Donnelly & Clay Colt

202 Station Road Hampton

Dear Board of Finance,

What would it cost the Hampton taxpayer if the Board of Education budget were passed as submitted?

If your property was assessed at \$100,000 it would increase the annual tax bill \$57.00.

This is \$4.75 per month.

If your property was assessed at \$200,000, it would increase the annual tax bill \$114.00.

This is \$9.50 per month.

If your property was assessed at \$300,000, it would increase the annual tax bill \$171.00.

This is \$14.25 per month.

And so on as the property value increases.

As a Hampton taxpayer who is retired and lives on a fixed income, I wholeheartedly support passing the Board of Education budget as they submitted it.

Sincerely,
Joan Fox

To the Board of Finance:

As the Chairman of the Republican Town Committee, I could have obtained several letters from our members urging you to minimize spending during the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Instead I'm here to speak to you as a citizen who is a member of the Board of Education and a retired educator with 40 years of experience.

Last week, the Board of Ed voted to award a \$13,000 early retirement incentive. The financial basis for this, the only firm savings relayed, was the potential \$26,000 we might have to pay in unemployment costs in laying off a teacher if no one were to retire. There were no other definitive numbers on savings. So I'm not sure why we're having a discussion on an \$83,000 increase -- the salary of a retiring teacher is basically \$83,000.

I remain confident that we can provide a quality education under the 4th recommendation presented by the superintendent -- one teacher in each of the classrooms, and one additional teacher to provide instruction daily as needed in each of those classrooms. I have taught multi-aged groupings from kindergarten through grade 12, and have also served as the resource teacher administering to 18-20 different classrooms in Hartford.

In January we voted not to replace another retiring teacher with the thought that we have to make the school financially sustainable, and with the ultimate goal of multi-aged groupings. The school has spent approximately \$120,000 in the last two years on professional development focused on teaching to multi-grades.

I'm not certain whether or not we can afford to drop below a level budget, though I know there are some costs which trouble me. I think the principal, who received an 8% raise and is the top-paid employee in the town, out of respect for the families she serves, many of whom are struggling, should not receive another increase this year. I think all raises should be held at the 1.6% cost-of-living adjustment.

I'm deeply troubled to find the amount of time the students are out of the classroom, in some cases, they are out of the room more than in. The grades are separated for music, art, gym, media and health. I can't think why first and second graders can't sing together, third and fourth graders can't play ball together, and fifth and sixth graders can't paint together. These positions should be halved so that the grades are grouped together, and each special class should be limited to once a week. We shouldn't ponder why the school, in spite of ample funding and a capable staff, isn't doing well by state standards. They need to spend more time in the classroom.

Juan Arriola