

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 3 PRIMROSE STREET, NEWTOWN, CT
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2024**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Jordana Bloom, Laura Miller, Keith Alexander, Tom Long, Ben Ruben, Derek Pisani, Jennifer Nicoletti, John Zachos, Chris Gardner, Heather Dean, Eric Paradis, Jill Soderholm (via google meets)

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman Jeff Capeci, Finance Director Bob Tait, Superintendent Chris Melillo, BOE Chair Alison, and 12 members of the public

CALL TO ORDER: K. Alexander called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:30pm.

VOTER COMMENT: Lori Hudak, 53 Riverside Road – Concerned about the proposed tax increase. Asked the LC to think about the ramification of the budget increase on families that are struggling.

Don Lococo, 27 High Barlow Road – He spoke in favor of the BOE budget.

Phil Carroll, Field Stone Drive – He said that you can throw millions and millions to make a project better, but the towns people cannot afford that.

Brian Atherton, 30 Charter Ridge – He is a license real estate broker and a Newtown High School graduate. He thinks that there are inefficiencies in the budget that continue to grow and compound. There's a cost for education but we have to have quantitative results. We should strive to be the blue ribbon award school winner that we once were, and we should, based on how much we spend on education.

MINUTES: J. Bloom moved to approve the minutes of the 3/20/24 meeting. H. Dean seconded, all in favor. J. Bloom moved to approve the minutes of the 3/13/24 meeting, J. Zachos seconded.

J. Nicoletti amended the minutes of the March 13, 2024 meeting to change "The reason that came up, compared to other schools in that DRG, there were 20 schools that spend less per pupil and have a higher math/reading rates" to "J. Nicoletti noted that compared to other schools in that DRG, 20 schools spend less per pupil as far as budget. The majority, not all, have outcomes in Math and English that are better than ours. J. Nicoletti later noted that those schools also have a higher student teacher ratios." In the end of the paragraph beginning: "Education – E. Paradis reported". B. Ruben seconded, all in favor of the amendment.

D. Pisani amended the minutes of the March 13, 2024 meeting to change "D. Pisani articulated that last year there was \$500,000 budget surplus and this year they are projecting \$600,000, was that taken into account for the BOE budget? J. Gason replied that it was, they are going to need those funds to fill gaps" to "D. Pisani articulated that last year there was a \$500,000 budget surplus last year and a \$600,000 surplus this year and wondered if that was taken into the BOF's budget recommendation. J. Gaston did not confirm that they took the surplus into consideration" in the end of the paragraph beginning: "2024-2025 BOS and BOE Budget" C. Gardner seconded, all in favor for the amendment.

All in favor of approving the 3/13/24 minutes with amendments.

COMMUNICATIONS: There were several emails received regarding the budget that are attached to the minutes.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: C. Gardner reported that the Recycling Ad Hoc Committee had a meeting tonight. They had a wide range discussion about the future of solid waste disposal at the transfer station. The goal is to reduce trash overall.

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT: First Selectman Capeci reported that last Friday he went to Hartford to the state office of Historic Preservation where the FFH application was in front of them. They unanimously voted in favor of it, it will now be sent to Washington. The new Finance Director will start on Monday and she will have a two weeks to train with Bob Tait. The dispatchers have a tentative contract and the Police contract negotiation are ongoing.

NEW BUSINESS

Motion to call a referendum – J. Bloom made a motion to authorize and direct the Board of Selectman to call a referendum to held on April 23, 2024 between the hours of 6:00 am and 8:00 pm (E.T.) for the purpose of a vote by electors and qualified voters of the Town. J. Zachos seconded, all in favor.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2024-2025 BOS and BOE Budget – T. Long moved to approve the Board of Selectman budget as presented by the Board of Finance, B. Ruben seconded.

C. Gardner moved to reduce the Health District contingency by \$10,000, E. Paradis seconded. First Selectman Capeci explained that the Health District is made of up other towns. This is a budget that was approved by the district and the amount is leveled to the town and not necessarily something we can change. If you take away the health insurance costs, they were flat or slightly under from last year. Motion fails 10 NO to 2 YES (Long, Gardner).

Original BOS budget motion passes unanimously.

T. Long moved to approve the BOE budget as approved by the BOF to the LC in the amount of \$88,817,373, J. Bloom seconded.

D. Pisani moved to amend the BOF recommendation of the BOE 24/25 budget from \$88,817,373 to \$87,409,066 representing a 2.75% increase from the current budget, B. Ruben seconded. D. Pisani explained that data tracking of the budget over the years shows no correlation between budget increases and test scores. The fact that the BOE over budgeted by \$500,000 last year and they are overbudgeted this year \$600,000 that means the last 2 years they have over budgeted 18%. Addressing affordability, he asked the tax collector for a list of people that are struggling with their taxes. He was supplied with 30 pages double sided of people struggling. Superintendent Melillo had previously reported that the preliminary testing was showing improving but it did it with a budget of \$85 million. It isn't going to take money to improve test scores it takes leadership.

The BOF cut the BOE budget and quantified their adjustment. It was questioned how the proposed cut is quantified. D. Pisani explained that the idea was to give the money to the BOE and let them make the hard choices on how to allocate it. B. Ruben explained that they are proposing increasing the budget by 2.75% from the current budget. That is the number they are comfortable that taxpayers will pass. H. Dean articulated that the Newtown BOE is not a business, they are an educational organization. They are backfilling a major hole that was created due to the pandemic. Their scores have been going up, slowly and incrementally but going in the right direction. Amendment fails 5 YES (Rubin, Pisani, Nicoletti, Zachos, Long) to 7 NO (Gardner, Paradis, Dean, Bloom, Alexander, Miller, Soderholm)

T. Long moved to amend the BOE budget amount to \$87,917,373, J. Nicoletti seconded. The LC asked the Superintendent to speak about what that cut will look like. Superintendent Melillo explained that salaries, transportation, and supplies make up 90% of the budget. The reduction in the proposed BOE budget could result in a reduction of teachers. Amendment fails 6 YES (Long, Ruben, Nicoletti, Zachos, Miller, Pisani) to 6 NO (Gardner, Soderholm, Bloom, Alexander, Dean, Paradis).

C. Gardner moved to amend the BOE education budget in the amount of \$88,367,373, T. Long seconded. C. Gardner explained that this is a \$450,000 reduction of what the BOF proposed. T. Long articulated that he thinks it is important to keep advancing students as well as being mindful of those that do not have the means. There was concern from council members on how to quantify the cut.

B. Ruben moved to go into a 10 minute recess at 9:16pm. J. Zachos seconded, all in favor. Recess ended at 9:26pm.

E. Paradis moved to table the budget vote until the April 3, 2024 meeting, H. Dean seconded. Motion fails 4 YES (Bloom, Alexander, Dean, Paradis) to 8 NO (Rubin, Long, Gardner, Zachos, Pisani, Miller, Nicoletti, Soderholm)

Amendment motion fails 3 YES (Gardner, Miller, Long) to 9 NO (Ruben, Nicoletti, Zachos, Bloom, Alexander, Dean, Pisani, Paradis, Soderholm).

Original motion setting the BOE budget at \$88,817,373 which is 4.41% over last year with a mill rate of 3.82 as proposed by the BOF passes 7 YES (Gardner, Paradis, Dean, Bloom, Alexander, Miller, Soderholm) to 5 NO (Ruben, Nicoletti, Zachos, Long, Pisani).

J. Bloom moved the total budget of \$137,651,879 for a combined 3.81% increase and a mill rate of 3.82 and to also authorize the Finance Director to make minor adjustments, C. Gardner seconded. Motion passes 7 YES (Gardner, Paradis, Dean, Bloom, Alexander, Miller, Soderholm) to 5 NO (Ruben, Nicoletti, Zachos, Long, Pisani).

Voter Comment – Phil Carrol, Field Stone Drive - Finds it astonishing that you have no problem increasing the budget this much but you had a major problem with collecting taxes from people driving with illegal plates in this town.

Announcements – None

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:52pm.

*Respectfully submitted,
Arlene Miles, Clerk*

Attachment: Correspondence



Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

RE: BOE budget [Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council]

1 message

Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>
To: Philip Carroll <ppcarroll13@gmail.com>
Cc: Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Wed, Mar 27, 2024 at 1:00 PM

Hi Phil,

I appreciate you coming to meetings and staying informed. Thank you for bringing your concerns about the budget to the Legislative Council. As our deliberations continue, we will keep your thoughts in mind.

Your submission will be added to the correspondence of the next Legislative Council meeting.

--Keith

CC: LC Clerk

BCC: LC

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Respectfully,

Keith Alexander

Chair, Newtown Legislative Council

From: newtownct via newtownct <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 5:43 PM
To: lc.alexanderk@gmail.com
Subject: Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council

Submitted on Tuesday, March 26, 2024 - 5:43pm
Submitted by anonymous user: 172.70.135.125
Submitted values are:

Your name: Philip Carroll
Your e-mail address: ppcarroll13@Gmail.com

Subject: BOE budget

Message:

Dear Legislative Members.

I am disappointed with the way the board of education just submitted basically the same budget as last year but with approximately five million dollars added to the total. I did attend one of the legislative council's education sub-committee meetings. When a council member asked what the roll of the dean of students would be and received the answer from the board of ed chair, it was then asked "what if the desired results were not achieved after hiring this person. The answer that was given was, then we will have to try something else. With that said, why wouldn't they just tell the parents and students that refuse to attend school, that they are not going to pass to the next grade or graduate. There must be some accountability from the student and parent. Hiring more personnel is not the answer. The finance board moved half a million dollars from the boe budget and put it to be paid from the non-reoccurring fund. That is not a reduction, its just paid for from other taxpayer funds. This budget is excessive. With inflation on the rise, cost of everything is up, with no end in sight, Newtown seniors and young families cannot endure a tax increase of \$450.-\$500. Increase in one year.

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.newtown-ct.gov/node/86983/submission/174046>



Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

RE: Board of Ed budget letter [Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council]

1 message

Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>
To: Tiffany Hawley <Tiffany367@gmail.com>
Cc: Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Wed, Mar 27, 2024 at 1:00 PM

Hello Tiffany & Robert,

Thank you for bringing your comments about the budget to the Legislative Council. As our deliberations continue, we will keep your thoughts in mind.

Your submission will be added to the correspondence of the next Legislative Council meeting.

--Keith

CC: LC Clerk

BCC: LC

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Respectfully,

Keith Alexander

Chair, Newtown Legislative Council

From: newtownct via newtownct <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 11:07 PM
To: lc.alexanderk@gmail.com
Subject: Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council

Submitted on Tuesday, March 26, 2024 - 11:07pm
Submitted by anonymous user: 162.158.159.233
Submitted values are:

Your name: Tiffany Hawley
Your e-mail address: Tiffany367@gmail.com

Subject: Board of Ed budget letter

Message:

To the Newtown Board of Education:

We believe that the Board of Education budget should not be approved as it stands. We do not support the teaching of the children of Newtown the concepts of Critical Race Theory. The children of Newtown should be taught the essential skills and receive the knowledge to function as a productive member of society. The increased budget would unnecessarily burden the citizens of Newtown. Property assessments increased an average of 40 to 50 percent during the most recent reevaluation. Waterfront properties increased an average of over 60 percent. In these challenging economic times, an increase to the tax burden could possibly drive people away from Newtown, or discourage people from choosing Newtown as a community that they want to raise their family. There needs to be balance. The vast majority of the budget is for salaries and benefits. There needs to be fiscally responsible use of the current funding levels.

Regards,

Robert & Tiffany Hawley

27 Swamp Road

Newtown CT

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.newtown-ct.gov/node/86983/submission/174056>



Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

RE: BOE Budget [Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council]

1 message

Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>
To: Mary Atkinson <mpmcquail416@proton.me>
Cc: Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Wed, Mar 27, 2024 at 1:00 PM

Hello Mary,

Thank you for bringing your concerns about the budget to the Legislative Council. As our deliberations continue, we will keep your thoughts in mind.

Your submission will be added to the correspondence of the next Legislative Council meeting.

--Keith

CC: LC Clerk

BCC: LC

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Respectfully,

Keith Alexander

Chair, Newtown Legislative Council

From: newtownct via newtownct <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 10:36 AM
To: lc.alexanderk@gmail.com
Subject: Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council

Submitted on Wednesday, March 27, 2024 - 10:36am
Submitted by anonymous user: 172.68.54.118
Submitted values are:

Your name: Mary Atkinson
Your e-mail address: mpmcquail416@proton.me

Subject: BOE Budget

Message: I am writing to express my concern for the astronomical increase in the proposed BOE budget. I work as an educator in a Fairfield County school and my district has proposed a budget increase of a little over 2% after having increased less than 1% in the previous year. I went through the Newtown public schools, as did all of my children, and I have three grandchildren who live in town and will attend Newtown Public Schools. I fully support education and educators, however, this is an unacceptable increase, and what I feel will result in a tax increase that is unsustainable for many Newtowners. Please consider the current inflation, and excess costs people are facing and do what is best to adjust with a more reasonable increase that will support all residents.

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.newtown-ct.gov/node/86983/submission/174061>



Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Re: LC Minutes

1 message

Derek Pisani <ddpisani4@gmail.com>

Mon, Mar 25, 2024 at 11:05 AM

To: Jennifer Nicoletti <jnicolettinewtownlc@yahoo.com>

Cc: Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>, Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Hi Keith,

The correction I am looking to have made to the 13th minutes (under "New Business" "*2024-2025 BOS and BOE Budget*") is as follows:

D. Pisani articulated that last year there was a \$500,00 budget surplus last year and a \$600,000 surplus this year and wondered if that was taken into the BOF's budget recommendation. J. Gaston did not confirm that they took the surplus into consideration.

That is accurate and how I would like it to read in the record.

Thank you,

Derek

On Mon, Mar 25, 2024 at 9:13 AM Jennifer Nicoletti <jnicolettinewtownlc@yahoo.com> wrote:

I just listened. After Eric's subcommittee presentation, I noted "20 School spend less per pupil as far as budget. The majority have outcomes in Math and English that are better than ours."

Differentiator here was I said the majority not all.

Later, in the meeting during discussion, I added that schools with better outcomes also have higher student teacher ratios and noted I Had omitted it from my previous statement.

On Sunday, March 24, 2024, 11:04 PM, Jennifer Nicoletti <jnicolettinewtownlc@yahoo.com> wrote:

I'll listen again tomorrow so I can put it down Word for Word. There was my initial statement earlier in the meeting and then an addition to my statement later in the meeting.

Jennifer

On Sunday, March 24, 2024, 10:59 PM, Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Jennifer and Derek,

I need you to each write up your changes to the 3-13 minutes so that people know what adjustment is requested for the minutes.

Please note that minutes are meant to reflect what happened at the meeting (as opposed to what you "meant" to say) and are not required to be word-for-word accurate but should certainly convey the opinion/issue stated in the meeting. I think you are aware of this as I remember Derek saying he checked the recording to be sure his change was what he had said.

Please send the change suggestions to me and Arlene so that I can send them to the Council and they will be ready to be included when we go to approve the minutes at the next meeting.

Thank you—

--Keith

From: Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Sent: Friday, March 15, 2024 12:04 PM

To: Ben Ruben <benruben.newtown@gmail.com>; Christopher Gardner <cgardner4242@gmail.com>; Derek Pisani <Ddpisani4@gmail.com>; Eric Paradis <ericp4newtown@gmail.com>; Heather Dean <HDeanLCD3@gmail.com>; Jennifer Nicoletti <jnicolettinewtownlc@yahoo.com>; Jill Soderholm <jc.soderholm@gmail.com>; John Zachos <jzachos06470@gmail.com>; Jordana Bloom <jordanabloom.newtown@gmail.com>; Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>; Laura Miller <miller4newtown@gmail.com>; Tom Long <tsplong07@gmail.com>

Cc: Town Clerk <town.clerk@newtown-ct.gov>

Subject: LC Minutes

Attached are the minutes from Wednesday's Public Hearing and Regular meeting.

Renee, please post. Thank you!

Arlene Miles

Public Works Administrator
203.270.4300



Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Re: LC Minutes

1 message

Jennifer Nicoletti <jnicolettinewtownlc@yahoo.com>

Mon, Mar 25, 2024 at 9:13 AM

To: Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>, Derek Pisani <Ddpisani4@gmail.com>

Cc: Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

I just listened. After Eric's subcommittee presentation, I noted "20 School spend less per pupil as far as budget. The majority have outcomes in Math and English that are better than ours."

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Hi Jennifer and Derek,

I need you to each write up your changes to the 3-13 minutes so that people know what adjustment is requested for the minutes.

Please note that minutes are meant to reflect what happened at the meeting (as opposed to what you "meant" to say) and are not required to be word-for-word accurate but should certainly convey the opinion/issue stated in the meeting. I think you are aware of this as I remember Derek saying he checked the recording to be sure his change was what he had said.

Please send the change suggestions to me and Arlene so that I can send them to the Council and they will be ready to be included when we go to approve the minutes at the next meeting.

Thank you—

--Keith

From: Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Sent: Friday, March 15, 2024 12:04 PM

To: Ben Ruben <benruben.newtown@gmail.com>; Christopher Gardner <cgardner4242@gmail.com>; Derek Pisani <Ddpisani4@gmail.com>; Eric Paradis <ericp4newtown@gmail.com>; Heather Dean <HDeanLCD3@gmail.com>; Jennifer Nicoletti <jnicolettinewtownlc@yahoo.com>; Jill Soderholm <lc.jsoderholm@gmail.com>; John Zachos <jzachos06470@gmail.com>; Jordana Bloom <jordanabloom.newtown@gmail.com>; Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>; Laura Miller <miller4newtown@gmail.com>; Tom Long <tsplong07@gmail.com>

Cc: Town Clerk <town.clerk@newtown-ct.gov>

Subject: LC Minutes

Attached are the minutes from Wednesday's Public Hearing and Regular meeting.

Renee, please post. Thank you!

Arlene Miles

Public Works Administrator
203.270.4300



Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

BOE Budget Book Page 30

1 message

Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>
Cc: Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Sat, Mar 23, 2024 at 11:58 AM

Hello Council Members,

Tanja Gouveia worked out most of the difference between the graph and table on page 30 of the BOE Budget that was discussed at Wednesday's meeting. She notes that her findings are off by 0.19 FTE because the formal for calculating each side are long and complex and she was not able to reconcile it that evening.

My apologies for missing this in my email Thursday morning and not bringing you these results earlier in the week.

Below are the positions included in the graph; the difference between the graph and the table on the same page:

3.0 sped supervisors
1.0 sped director
19.0 guidance counselors
6.85 social workers
11.0 psychologists
3.0 G&A (super, asst super, director of business)
1.0 K-12 music & art director
44.85 total

--Keith

CC: Clerk

BCC: LC

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Respectfully,



Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

HEAD COUNT FOR FIRE TIME OF SERVICE PLAN

1 message

Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>
Cc: Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Sat, Mar 23, 2024 at 10:52 AM

Hello Council Members,

Bob Tait provided us with the head count for the fire time of service (pension like) plan in response to questions at Wednesday's meeting:

Participant Summary

Active Members	124
Vested-Terminated	176
Retired and Beneficiaries	39
<i>Total Count:</i>	339

--Keith

CC: Clerk

BCC: LC

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Respectfully,

Keith Alexander

Chair, Newtown Legislative Council



Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

RE: 24-25 Budget [Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council]

1 message

Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>
To: Ryan Knapp <ryan.w.knapp@gmail.com>
Cc: Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Wed, Mar 27, 2024 at 3:54 PM

Hi Ryan,

Thank you for bringing some budget history along your concerns about the budget to the Legislative Council. As our deliberations continue, we will keep your thoughts in mind.

Your submission will be added to the correspondence of the next Legislative Council meeting.

--Keith

CC: LC Clerk

BCC: LC

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Respectfully,

Keith Alexander

Chair, Newtown Legislative Council

From: newtownct via newtownct <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>

Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 3:16 PM

To: lc.alexanderk@gmail.com

Subject: Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council

Submitted on Wednesday, March 27, 2024 - 3:15pm

Submitted by anonymous user: 172.68.54.74

Submitted values are:

Your name: Ryan Knapp

Your e-mail address: ryan.w.knapp@gmail.com

Subject: 24-25 Budget

Message:

Hello,

Firstly, as I have been in your position I understand the efforts that go into a comprehensive budget review, so I want to start by thanking you for your service to our community.

In the budget book page 26 shows Fiscal Policy and Trends going back to 07-08. In that table one can see that during no recent year has there been as significant of a tax increase due to new spending as what has been requested for the 24-25 Fiscal Year. (The outliers in spending increases reflect grant revenue related to Federal VOCA and COVID grants, as well as transfers to Capital Non-Recurring, expenses that were not passed onto the Property Tax payers.)

This year's budget request proposes to buck that trend with a large spending increase, well exceeding Grand List growth, and would therefore be shouldered by the local tax payers. Please keep in mind that just last year a larger portion of the tax burden was already shifted to our residents from the revenue side during the state mandated revaluation process reflecting the changes in the real-estate market, something that the prior Council was sensitive to during the budget.

It can be tempting to try to pull spending out of the operations budget by funding it with Cap Non-Rec rather than making more difficult decisions about spending, however this seductive practice creates a future funding cliff in the event Cap Non-Rec is unavailable. It also stifles the Town's ability to reduce debt and fund large projects with savings as opposed to running up the figurative credit card. For example, last year we put a Police Car back into the operations budget as it is on an annual replacement cycle and therefore it is recurring. Newtown should strive to level fund recurring expenses, and not rely on surpluses, windfalls, or bonding, as we worked to do with roads.

Newtown has gone over a decade without a budget failing at referendum. Having served on the Council during that period I believe that is due to our responsibly balancing the needs of providing services with the burden asked of the tax payers. Many residents in Town are struggling financially as inflation has far exceeded wage growth. Increasing costs of living have been passed onto local families at every juncture, from groceries to energy to auto costs to rent, producing large increases in the number of people living paycheck to paycheck or requiring services such as food and fuel assistance.

These burdens are disproportionately felt by those who can least afford it, the less affluent working families, and seniors on fixed incomes. The tax increase proposed is not insignificant for these residents.

I do not believe it is good stewardship to send forward a budget to see if it will be approved as that happens at municipal expense and undervalues our resident's time. I hope that in your deliberations this Council will seriously weigh the struggles of many of our residents against the requested increases in search of a responsible balance that will confidently pass referendum.

Best Regards,

-Ryan Knapp

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.newtown-ct.gov/node/86983/submission/174076>



Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

RE: Budget [Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council]

1 message

Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>
To: Lisa Kessler <lisa4newtown@gmail.com>
Cc: Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Wed, Mar 27, 2024 at 3:33 PM

Hello Lisa,

Thank you for bringing your comments about the budget to the Legislative Council. As our deliberations continue, we will keep your thoughts in mind.

Your submission will be added to the correspondence of the next Legislative Council meeting.

--Keith

CC: LC Clerk

BCC: LC

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Respectfully,

Keith Alexander

Chair, Newtown Legislative Council

From: newtownct via newtownct <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 3:06 PM
To: lc.alexanderk@gmail.com
Subject: Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council

Submitted on Wednesday, March 27, 2024 - 3:05pm
Submitted by anonymous user: 172.68.54.118
Submitted values are:

Your name: Lisa Kessler
Your e-mail address: lisa4newtown@gmail.com
Subject: Budget
Message:
Dear Legislative Council Members,

I oppose the increase in the Board of Ed budget.

Year over year, the BOE budget increases yet test scores continue to decline, enrollment remains flat and the fiscal year ends with a surplus.

Meanwhile, our administrators are some of the highest paid in our area yet nearby towns with smaller budgets are outperforming Newtown. There's clearly a disconnect somewhere.

Maintaining the status-quo while simply adding more money to the budget will not improve our academic standings or the education our students receive. Re-allocating funds within the budget in a way that puts the focus back on students, their needs and an emphasis on teaching academics may be necessary in order to achieve progress without adding an additional tax burden onto our residents.

This current budget path is not sustainable especially considering the ongoing inflation we're all dealing with.

Thank you for your time,
Lisa Kessler

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.newtown-ct.gov/node/86983/submission/174071>



Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

RE: BOE budget is too high [Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council]

1 message

Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>
To: Cathy Reiss <clreiss@charter.net>
Cc: Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Wed, Mar 27, 2024 at 2:07 PM

Hello Cathy,

Thank you for bringing your comments about the budget to the Legislative Council. As our deliberations continue, we will keep your thoughts in mind.

Your submission will be added to the correspondence of the next Legislative Council meeting.

--Keith

CC: LC Clerk

BCC: LC

--

Respectfully,

Keith Alexander

Chair, Newtown Legislative Council

From: newtownct via newtownct <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 1:43 PM
To: lc.alexanderk@gmail.com
Subject: Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council

Submitted on Wednesday, March 27, 2024 - 1:43pm
Submitted by anonymous user: 172.70.42.220
Submitted values are:

Your name: Cathy Reiss
Your e-mail address: clreiss@charter.net

Subject: BOE budget is too high

Message:

Dear Legislative Council,

I urge you to not pass the Board of Education budget at its current bottom-line. The increase is way too high and unsustainable.

While our student population has declined by roughly 30% over the past 17 years, the number of educational staff has continued to climb, and education spending has skyrocketed. Educational spending has increased over the last three years (including this proposed budget) at an amount greater than the last nine years combined. Once the 2024-2025 education budget is set, this will become the new baseline cost, which, as history has shown, will only continue to increase in the following years, making Newtown unaffordable for many of its residents.

According to the State Department of Education, here's the 2022-2023 Net Current Expenditures per Pupil of Newtown vs. surrounding towns in our District Reference Group (DRG – State Dept. of Ed. grouping of school districts based on similar socioeconomic status of their students):

Trumbull \$18,310

Monroe \$18,452

Brookfield \$19,127

Newtown \$20,728

In fact, Newtown is in the top third of Net Current Expenditures per Pupil of the 21 school districts in our DRG (which includes Greenwich).

I've lived in Newtown long enough to remember when Newtown High was a Blue Ribbon School, and when our per pupil expenditures were known to be lower than our surrounding towns, yet at the same time, our schools were known to provide a very high-quality education. I have confidence in our elected Board of Education that they can figure out how to provide a high-quality education to our students at a much lower price point—we've proven it can be done.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Reiss

Newtown, CT

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.newtown-ct.gov/node/86983/submission/174066>



Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

RE: BOE Budget [Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council]

1 message

Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>
To: Vanessa Visners <vvisners@gmail.com>
Cc: Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Sat, Mar 23, 2024 at 11:08 AM

Hello Vanessa,

Thank you for bringing your comments about the budget to the Legislative Council. As our deliberations continue, we will keep your thoughts in mind.

Your submission will be added to the correspondence of the next Legislative Council meeting.

--Keith

CC: LC Clerk

BCC: LC

--

Respectfully,

Keith Alexander

Chair, Newtown Legislative Council

From: newtownct via newtownct <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 20, 2024 6:47 PM
To: lc.alexanderk@gmail.com
Subject: Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council

Submitted on Wednesday, March 20, 2024 - 6:47pm
Submitted by anonymous user: 172.70.174.48
Submitted values are:

Your name: Vanessa Visners
Your e-mail address: vvisners@gmail.com

Subject: BOE Budget

Message:

Good evening,

I am writing to support fully funding the BOE budget as it was presented. As a mother of 3 and educator, there is no better investment for our community than in our future, the children. I am sure you too, value our children and are looking ahead to the future. If so, yes is the only way to vote tonight.

Thank you,

Vanessa Visners

Currituck Rd.

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.newtown-ct.gov/node/86983/submission/173926>



Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

RE: School Board Budget [Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council]

1 message

Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>
To: Fiona <fionam945@gmail.com>
Cc: Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Sat, Mar 23, 2024 at 11:08 AM

Hello Fiona,

Thank you for bringing your comments about the budget to the Legislative Council. As our deliberations continue, we will keep your thoughts in mind.

Your submission will be added to the correspondence of the next Legislative Council meeting.

--Keith

CC: LC Clerk

BCC: LC

--
Respectfully,

Keith Alexander

Chair, Newtown Legislative Council

From: newtownct via newtownct <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>

Sent: Wednesday, March 20, 2024 9:16 PM

To: lc.alexanderk@gmail.com

Subject: Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council

Submitted on Wednesday, March 20, 2024 - 9:15pm

Submitted by anonymous user: 172.70.135.55

Submitted values are:

Your name: Fiona

Your e-mail address: fionam945@gmail.com

Subject: School Board Budget

Message:

Dear superintendent, board of education and legislative bodies,

I hope this letter finds you both well. I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the proposed budget put forth by the school board for the upcoming fiscal year. While I acknowledge the importance of adequately funding our education system, I am troubled by the significant tax increase that will result from this proposed budget and the lack of internal assessment of school staff. During a recent Board of Education meeting, I was disheartened to hear the chairman mention that a \$20 increase in pay-to-play fees would strain families, yet seemingly disregarding the overall tax burden being placed on all residents. As a dedicated member of the Newtown community, I firmly believe in the value of providing quality education to our children. However, I am concerned that the proposed budget fails to strike the right balance between meeting the needs of our schools and being mindful of the financial strain it places on residents. As elected officials, you are responsible for representing the tax payers and finding the right balance and making the district work. While I understand that there are inherent costs associated with maintaining and improving our schools, I implore you to reconsider the proposed budget and explore alternative avenues to fund our education system without imposing such a heavy tax burden on the community. It is imperative to identify efficiencies and prioritize spending to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being utilized judiciously. Moreover, it is crucial to take into account the current economic climate and the financial hardships that many families in our community may be facing. A significant tax increase has the potential to place undue strain on already stretched budgets and could possibly lead to some residents being forced out of their homes. As stewards of our community's resources, it is incumbent upon the school board and the Board of Education to seek solutions that are both fiscally responsible and sustainable in the long term. I respectfully urge you to reconsider the proposed budget and to explore alternative methods to address the funding needs of our schools. Thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns. I trust that you will carefully weigh the implications of the proposed budget and make decisions as you are representing all of us and that they are in the best interest of the Newtown community as a whole.

Thank You

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.newtown-ct.gov/node/86983/submission/173931>



Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

RE: BOE Budget [Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council]

1 message

Keith Alexander <lc.alexanderk@gmail.com>
To: Melissa Gomez <mgomez046@icloud.com>
Cc: Arlene Miles <arlene.miles@newtown-ct.gov>

Sat, Mar 23, 2024 at 11:08 AM

Hello Melissa,

Thank you for bringing your comments about the budget to the Legislative Council. As our deliberations continue, we will keep your thoughts in mind.

Your submission will be added to the correspondence of the next Legislative Council meeting.

--Keith

CC: LC Clerk

BCC: LC

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Respectfully,

Keith Alexander

Chair, Newtown Legislative Council

From: newtownct via newtownct <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 20, 2024 10:31 PM
To: lc.alexanderk@gmail.com
Subject: Form submission from: Contact the Newtown Legislative Council

Submitted on Wednesday, March 20, 2024 - 10:30pm
Submitted by anonymous user: 172.71.223.67
Submitted values are:

Your name: Melissa M. Gomez
Your e-mail address: mgomez046@icloud.com

Subject: BOE Budget

Message:

I've just listened to this evening's legislative council meeting. While education remains important to most, there are some serious concerns about raising taxes for families with in this community. I for one personally am working two jobs, while my husband and his crew work tirelessly to enhance Newtown and keep the roads safe. We can not afford an increase in our taxes.

There are districts around us who are doing more with less and they have better test scores. That speaks volumes.

I have not heard one valid reason as for the need to accommodate a "dean of students"

Yes every district is going to experience an increase in behavioral dysregulation. We isolated our children from the world for nearly two years- if you think these are not directly affected you are wrong.

The BOE budget is astronomical and we are spending money for a DEIA consultant firm, for what? The DEI sub committee voted against changing the terminology to DEIA to match the consultant - make it make sense. If we can't even implement a simple change in terminology/vocabulary how are we to have confidence that this district will be able to successfully execute these plans! I sure hope this is not wasted money.

I urge you to keep in mind the people who are currently struggling to make ends meet and get groceries. Please be considerate significant cut to the ridiculously high BOE budget.

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.newtown-ct.gov/node/86983/submission/173936>