

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Christopher Heinen	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am a public school teacher for the City of New York and a parent of a Stamford Public Schools student, so I have insight into both ends of education during these unprecedented times. From what I can see, the teachers are doing an amazing job, and to reward them and the students at this time with less is less than counterproductive. Your teachers have stepped up, your students have stepped up. Budget cuts are inappropriate at this time. Either the State or Federal government needs to step in to assist, or fat simply needs to be trimmed from other places in government. Incremental increases to beach passes or day passes, spread it around. (Not to say that this would make up the gap, but it's a start) However, you can't take money away from the students or the teachers. Something absolutely needs to be done, but it's not the cuts that you propose. Back to the drawing board you go. Leave those educators and staffs who love and educate our children alone. As an educator, we know that you will draw upon our hearts to do more for the same or less pay - it's always been the way. What you are proposing simply won't work for Stamford. This will not attract families - it will send them fleeing. Do what you know to be right.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
Lisa McComb-Williams (Children: Harper and Harlow Williams)	<p>To Whom it May Concern,</p> <p>As a Stamford parent of two elementary school aged children (1st and 3rd grade) I am appalled that you are proposing cutting the Stamford School budget by \$15 million. My daughters attend Hart Magnet Elementary School and we love our school. It is a wonderfully diverse inner city school and I can't imagine you will eliminate resources from those students in need. Both of my daughters receive specialist help with reading and this is essential for their continued progress. I know there are many other services offered besides reading e.g., speech, social/emotional etc.</p> <p>I am also a member of the Hart PTO and I am very involved in classroom and school activities. I can attest to the classes being at capacity, teachers and specialists working extremely hard and every square inch of space being used. How you are going to do this a jeopardize our kids learning and their environment?</p> <p>Sincerely, concerned parent</p>
Jessica Moon & Family	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I just caught wind of the fact that the Board of Finance is considering approving a budget that cuts \$15 million from the school budgets...</p> <p>My family is COMPLETELY OPPOSED. I get that there are budget issues, and I truly sympathize. I realize budget cuts have to happen. Please cut them somewhere else! I know people are protesting the closure of Terry Connors Rink. It would be sad if that happened. You know what's sadder? Cutting money from the public</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>schools that are already stretched far too thin!!</p> <p>My father works at Czescik Marina. He loves his seasonal job. That said, there are currently 40 out of 200 boats docked there. Does it need to be open? Can the marinas be temporarily consolidated? I'd hate for my dad to lose his job but in the bigger picture, I think he'd agree that the schools are more important.</p> <p>Let's think this through rationally...</p> <p>1) Money is cut from a school district already struggling to provide even BASIC HEALTHY CONDITIONS for students and staff.</p> <p>2) People with the means will MOVE OUT OF STAMFORD or not move here to begin with. Therefore, they will not contribute to the tax dollars that fund the schools.</p> <p>3) The students, many already extremely vulnerable, lose even more stability and opportunities. THEN what happens?</p> <p>If we can't prioritize education, what IS important to us? It's literally the one thing - THE ONE THING - that can make a truly fundamental difference in the trajectory of an individual's and community's path.</p> <p>So... instead of cutting money from the school budget, how about cops give out more traffic tickets? My son is 10 and he already knows that when driving in Stamford, "never just go when the light turns green". Why? Because half the time someone blows through the red light! I'm guessing \$15 million can be made up right there. ;)</p> <p>While it would completely stink, close a park. Fund less parades. ANYTHING but cut more money from these schools. I get that we're in a budget pickle but schools ARE NOT the place to make the cuts.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
<p>Respectfully, Jenna Califano BOE Reading Teacher On Behalf of the Intervention Team from Davenport Ridge: Annie Langschultz – SRBI Teacher Elizabeth Bobyr-Cambria- IST K-2 Kimberly Kolman – IST 3-5</p>	<p>May 18, 2020</p> <p>Dear Board of Finance, Board of Education, Board of Representatives and Mayor Martin,</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of myself and my fellow colleagues. I read with great interest all of the proposals for cutting the budget. I know that it is a daunting task to review all of the options and to make fair and fiscally sound decisions. As a lifetime Stamford Resident and taxpayer, as well as the BOE Reading teacher for the last 2 years at Davenport Ridge, I am disheartened and appalled at the options presented to make up for the \$15 million deficit to the budget. We are being presented with the impossible option of either losing integral positions in our schools or taking a pay freeze for the next 2 years.</p> <p>In our school, our Intervention Team, which includes an SRBI teacher, IST K-2, IST 3-5 and BOE Reading teacher, works tirelessly with classroom teachers and students ensuring that each child gets instruction that is appropriate for their academic level. We are in classrooms everyday supporting teachers with their daily instruction and personally working with students that are struggling. Our caseloads are completely packed, as each one of us sees a minimum of 5 groups a day from grades K-5, each with at least 4 students. If our</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>positions are cut, there will be at least 80 struggling students who will not get the support they need. Since schools have been closed and we began distance learning, we have continued to meet with and support our students daily through live tutoring and lessons, all while homeschooling our own children.</p> <p>I would encourage you to use the existing \$14 million surplus and the other resources that are available to fund the operating budget and not penalize the teachers AND students for circumstances that are beyond our control.</p>
<p>Elizabeth Barton, MS, CCC-SLP Elizabeth Barton, MS, CCC-SLP Bilingual Speech-Language Pathologist K.T. Murphy Elementary School ebarton@stamfordct.gov 203.977.6118</p>	<p>My name is Elizabeth Barton and I am a speech pathologist in the district. I've been working for Stamford for 5 years and my children are Stamford students. One of the attractions to Stamford was that students of Stamford so readily return as teachers of Stamford. So many of my colleagues grew up and went to these schools. I thought, "Wow this must be some district that students become staff". Having worked in other school districts, I knew this meant something.</p> <p>It is however, disappointing to see this community, so tightly knit and committed to students be so quickly placed on the chopping block. My work in other districts has taught me that educators and schools are so often under appreciated and undervalued. I didn't expect to see that here.</p> <p>Schools, teachers, educators - we are the front lines. We are the ones who see the ins and outs of students' lives. We are the ones shaping tiny humans into the next generation of Stamford educators. We are the ones who have spent and continue to spend hours upon hours of our own time meeting students' needs, consulting with our colleagues, meeting parent's needs. This push for social emotional support isn't just about our students, it has most definitely also been about their parents. I have personally taken so very many calls from parents who are overwhelmed, tired, confused, frustrated, and disappointed at what their children have lost in this time as well as what they have personally lost.</p> <p>I will not pretend to understand how the finances need to be run or taken care of. I am not a financial expert. But in the same vein, you are not a front line educator. You are not working with limited resources, telling families you can't provide what they need because there is no money (which of course you CANNOT say because money cannot be the reason a student misses out, but let's be frank... it is!). Looking at students who should be thriving in their reading, writing and language skills but they can barely remember how to spell their last names. It is awful, absolutely awful to look at my students, see how behind and limited they are, see their potential and know there is nothing else I can provide. My time and resources are so severely limited there is actually nothing else but prayer.</p> <p>The special education department has suffered some severe cuts already, how can we do with yet another overall educational cut? How can you believe for a second that we will be able to continue to bear the weight of more work and less pay with the same expectations set? How can I keep my children in this district and believe they are getting their very best chance when I see all that they miss out on?</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>Listen to your educators. Listen to the ones who've been around for 4 decades and those that have been here 4 years. We aren't here to get rich, we are here to serve and love this community. We are here to make the path for these children, many of whom come from under privileged families.</p> <p>You can do better. You are smart, well educated individuals who can find a different way. Cutting education is not the way.</p>
<p>Binta Patel <bintapatel@gmail.com></p>	<p>I am the parent of an 8 year old and 6 year old at Davenport Ridge. I CHOOSE for my children to be in the public schools because of the diversity and education standards that are equally provided to our children. Please DO NOT cut funding as our children need it to be competitive in this world and our school system requires it to stay on par!</p>
<p>Luci Santora 2nd Grade Teacher Hart Magnet School</p>	<p>Dear Board of Finance Members,</p> <p>I believe a very important point has yet to be brought to the table. Did you know that many of the teachers in the district are doing so much more than just educating the students of Stamford? Many of us across the district are going to our students' homes to bring meals, groceries, and financial assistance. Using money out of our own pockets to ensure that our students' basic needs are being met. We know that if their basic needs are not being met, there is no way they are able to learn effectively. We are working harder than we ever have before, even putting ourselves at risk along with members of our families. Please reconsider these budget cuts, the families of Stamford are going to need us more than ever. Thank you.</p>
<p>Diane Drugge <ddrugge@gmail.com></p>	<p>Request: Retain the Librarian's assistants in the public school libraries.</p> <p>With total respect for other demands at this difficult time, I do urge you to consider retaining the personnel who support the school librarians. I am a lifetime teacher (53 years in the classroom) groomed at the middle schools, Westhill and then Stamford High School, my last stop, for my final twenty years.</p> <p>Thanks to a generous Stamford Board of Education I was placed in a position to lead a cadre of 17 teachers to Columbia Teachers College, for a summer's immersion in the Special Education Department under the direction of four extraordinary professors, masters of interdisciplinary education. Two of these professors worked with me and my teachers for three years.</p> <p>The Columbia program had several guidelines, three simplified here:</p> <p>You cannot base results on a test if the child has had no exposure.</p> <p>You cannot always impose an area of curriculum that clicks with a student's interest.</p> <p>All humans need to feel some form of empowerment. Students learning what interests them makes school ever so much more relevant.</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>As an English teacher, a little role playing goes a long way: Teacher: (Assuming a student, Wayne has been a reluctant learner, with a portrait of such for some years back) - "Tell me, Wayne (age:15?), something that you heard at home or elsewhere that was interesting." Finally he tells me that his grandfather said in reference to the distancing due to the Corona Flu," We sure couldn't go to a drive-in these nights." Wayne is confused. His inner thoughts: Fast food? Golf - balls, you can stay a distance outside for the examples Wayne has. The teacher intrudes on Wayne's confusion "Well, I don't know much about them either . I do know the kids loved to go there in cars with their friends. They could all go to the movies in one car, and only pay for the admission of the car." Wayne likes the idea: movies, girls, cars. Teacher:"If you did a report on this, I would learn a lot, too! In fact, so would the class. Do you want to do this by yourself or would you like to find someone to work with you on this? Maybe you could get some extra credit from your math teacher: Let's brainstorm. Let's think of all the times you would have to use math, to tell us how many of these theaters there were?, the difference in income in different states, etc. Maybe the history teacher would give you extra credit to tell her which part of the country these parks started or the ratio of people to area for a successful drive in, the cost of land etc. Every subject could play into a topic such as this. But it is the librarian who would lead the inexperienced student to primary sources, pictures of the first Drive-in, the addition of eating accommodations; when did they become a part of amusement parks? Many, many times my students have been the explorers, the definers, of what they wanted to know, with wonderful librarians through the years who helped them to find information, and visuals to show a past time. When students use their higher levels of thinking: application and synthesis and evaluation with topics that are initiated by their own curiosity they are lifetime learners. That is what the Stamford High Schools, and Middle Schools, and even elementary schools strive to do. Please do retain the excellence that is available: a minimum of three adults and a teacher staffing the library, moving among the students on their choice topics: bringing students the JOY and OWNERSHIP of their own learning, singly or in groups. Assist the staff in their efforts to reach each child to become an "expert in the room," to be the big deal occasionally. Thank you. Diane Drugge, Class of 2013.</p>
Megan R. Lonegan	<p>May 18, 2020 To the Board of Finance, Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts on the proposed cuts to the 2020-2021 school budget. I am so proud to be an SPS teacher. After working in other districts, I can honestly say that Stamford Public Schools is a leader in quality education and in my experience, it has always valued it's dedicated staff.</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>That is why I am shocked and deeply concerned about the recent proposed cuts. At this extraordinarily challenging moment it is not the time to affect massive cuts to our schools. In my opinion, this is the time to invest in our future, not gamble with it. As such, I suggest that some of those available funds be utilized to greatly soften the sting of this budgetary crisis. Asking schools to absorb a massive cut that will result in the loss of key positions, at a time when they will be most needed, is not appropriate.</p> <p>Social distancing, alternative scheduling, continued and improved distance learning strategies, and continuing to provide social and mental health safety will require all hands on deck at SPS. The work that we will be doing is key to the complete, safe re-opening of our community and should be seen as such.</p> <p>Cutting the very positions that have allowed for the smooth transition to Distance Learning in these unprecedented times such as Technology Educators, Magnet Programs, Media Specialists and Guidance Counselors would be crippling. Increasing classroom sizes during a time where medical science tells us how important it is to distance is dangerous. Removing staff from the lives of students who deserve support and to return to some normalcy is irresponsible.</p> <p>I guarantee you, as a staff, we are up to the challenge of recovering our community. We need your support. We are definitely in a crisis, but like most crises, it is also an opportunity. Who we are will be reflected in this budget. Are we committed to helping our educational system be successful? Do we care about our kids and educators in Stamford facing this head on? Are we willing to face the coming realities of a post-covid educational system head-on? This is the opportunity for Stamford to lead, and to commit to making a difference in the lives of all of our diverse students. Without an investment in their future, we cannot help them reach their full potential...Mind, Heart and Body.</p> <p>Thank you again for allowing me to share my opinion, for your commitment to Stamford and for your willingness to lead on this issue on our behalf.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
Nicola Boxall	<p>Hi,</p> <p>I'm a parent of two kids in Stamford Public Schools. I was recently made aware of the Board of Finance's intention to cut the funding to the Stamford Public Schools by fifteen million dollars. I strenuously object to a cut of this magnitude for two main reasons:</p> <p>1) Our teachers and superintendent's office have really stepped up and delivered magnificently during the current crisis. In contrast to friends/family across the globe, our teachers here in Stamford are continuing to teach and my kids continue to have structure and live instruction during their day. Something for which, I will be eternally grateful.</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>2) Many, many families in Stamford need our help more than ever for basic meals right now. Please don't cut the meal program. Sincerely</p>
<p>Claire Cioffi</p>	<p>To Whom it May Concern,</p> <p>I am writing you tonight to voice my concerns regarding Board of Finance’s intention to cut \$15 million from the Stamford Public Schools.</p> <p>As a parent and resident of the city of Stamford, I feel a grave injustice is being perpetrated onto the children of Stamford. In these unprecedented times our children’s education is in jeopardy by reducing the budget. We are widening the educational divide and doing a grave disservice to our children and if anything we should be increasing the budget. In the coming years we will have to provide support and remediation to ensure our children regain the necessary skills they missed from a lack of a formal education.</p> <p>As the board of directors it is up to you to provide necessary finances to ensure our students have a top notch educational experience provided by highly qualified educators in a rigorous and stimulating environment.</p> <p>I hope you strongly consider the letters you have received from parents urging you not to reduce the budget.</p> <p>Thank you,</p>
<p>Leigh Demarco</p>	<p>Hello Board Of Finance Members,</p> <p>I write to express my objection to the \$15 million in cuts to the BOE proposed budget. I have two children in SPS, one at Newfield School and one at Scofield Magnet Middle. Cutting funding will affect ALL families in the Stamford Public Schools, not just those who recieve academic support services.</p> <p>These cuts are inappropriate given the additional funding needed to make our schools safe again, both from mold and from COVID-19.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
<p>Andy Olson</p>	<p>I have some feedback for the budget meeting.</p> <p>I have lived in Stamford my entire life, I am the youngest of 3 and graduated from SHS in 2007.</p> <p>Growing up in Stamford, I have gone on to see my oldest sister and her friends become great people and accomplish a lot in life, providing back to the Stamford community and beyond. My other sister, who is the middle child, I have seen flourish and become a great and successful person that I look up to—her friends have also gone on to accomplish even better things. My age group, has already done some great things, some are in public office, a lot are teachers contributing to society. And the generations younger than me seem to take their learnings and their community to new heights.</p> <p>The progression I have noticed in Stamford over the last 30 years has been nothing but remarkable. It seems as</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>though each generation of Stamford students exceed the previous ones and build off of what they laid down. The only common denominator is all the success I have witnessed across generations are the teachers and their growth and commitment to the students. I just feel that it would be short sighted and selfish to have to cut any budget or jobs from teachers—it is doing a sever disservice to the future of Stamford and as a lifelong resident, would be one of the few times I have ever been disappointed by my city. Please don't take this short sighted approach. It will not be doing out city or future generations any favors. With hope,</p>
<p>Raji Sundararajan</p>	<p>With the lack of funding school teachers' salaries how is it reasonable to spend \$3 million to spend on demolition of the old police station?</p>
<p>Seth Diamond 203-249-6912</p>	<p>While I cannot make tonight's board of finance meeting, I want to make sure my voice is heard. Our schools are finally heading in the right direction, thanks to the leadership of Dr. Lucero. While we are dealing with unprecedented uncertainty, we must find a way to properly fund our schools. Cutting \$15 million from the proposed budget, which is certainly not a fatty one to start with, is unconscionable. It will result in a severe drop in services to my children and the thousands of other children in the district - and it penalizes the ones who are already most negatively affected by the COVID-19 virus. Surrounding towns have cut their budgets by \$1 - \$3 million from initial proposals - that is something I could accept. While that may not get you to a 0 tax increase in the coming fiscal year, it also would not be a "cut your nose to spite your face" move that would negatively affect our city for years to come. I implore you to make the right decision and properly fund our schools and support the superintendent in her recommendations.</p>
<p>Rolando Hotmail <youngrolando@hotmail.com></p>	<p>Thank you for organizing this meeting and allowing people to address the Board. I am discouraged and disappointed that I did not get a chance to speak. Frankly, Mr. Freedman seemed disinterested when the public was speaking and was more interested in cutting people off when they reached the 3-minute limit. He rarely looked up and seemed to be speaking at times to someone off camera. His whole affect was a "let's get this over with" attitude. Please publish the link to the recording of this meeting. Thanks again,</p>
<p>Leah Kagan Stamford resident, taxpayer and voter</p>	<p>Dear Board of Finance members: First, I want to thank you for the service that you provide to the community. I am sure these are challenging times for all of you and you are now forced to deal with the task of correcting the city's budget.</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

<p>leahrosekgaan@gmail.com 516-643-9367</p>	<p>I have lived in Stamford for 6 years. I have a 5 year old who is scheduled to enter Davenport Elementary in September as well as a 2 year old. Over the years I have pushed back on the countless negative things we have heard about Stamford Public Schools, resisted the temptation to move to a school district with "better ratings" (although we have seriously considered it many times), and have been very excited to start our son at Davenport this fall.</p> <p>Until now. The proposed cuts that will impact my son and his peers (many of whom are far less privileged than he is) are unfathomable and a horrific attempt to push the burden on children who need the most help. These cuts (ranging from phys ed to security to class room teachers) are not acceptable.</p> <p>We need to be talking about reducing class sizes so we can have any shot of getting kids back in an actual classroom this fall, and you are considering staff cuts. Security - a primary concern as a parent of a FIVE year old heading to school for the first time in the same state as the Sandy Hook shooting. Are we budgeting that we need to buy our students and staff face masks and put in entirely new systems to keep everyone safe during a pandemic?</p> <p>Increase our property taxes. Cut all the special events from the budget. We don't need the CITY to collect our leaves! Residents can survive without city-made parties. It will not survive if you gut the education budget to this extreme extent.</p> <p>My family will not tolerate this horrific gutting of the school system. We will move as will many others OR they will chose private schools instead. The children you are harming are those who are in greatest need of the most support possible, and for even making these considerations I am disappointed in your inability to lead during this crisis and for targeting the children who have no voice in this process.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>Respectfully, Sarah Santasiero IST K-2 Reading Teacher Courtney Simon B.O.E Reading Teacher Stacey Wood IST 3-5 Reading Teacher Julia A. Stark Elementary School</p>	<p>An unforeseen pandemic, its potential impact on students and a set of SPS reading teachers behind them: It is March 12, 2020; for all intents and purposes, a day in a normal school year. Reading intervention is going as planned. There are data collections on a daily basis, Literacy How is inserting the most up to date reading research practices which are evident throughout the school. Both ELL and non-ELL students alike are receiving one form of Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention across grades K-5 from our B.O.E reading teacher, IST K-2, and IST 3-5 reading interventionists. Each interventionist is fitting 6-8 groups into a school day. Every student identified as in need of intervention by the Literacy Team, classroom teacher and SRBI coordinator receive a personalized focus of instruction used by each intervention teacher to target their specific, small group instruction. In this particular school, the Literacy Team serves two roles. One is to evaluate student strengths and weaknesses, identify the student's focus of instruction, then to plan and execute this instruction while tracking progress through on-going data collection. The other role is to serve as the SRBI coordinator for the school and each identified student. Every 6-8 weeks they meet with classroom teachers and/or parents to</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>discuss each student’s progress and to develop and track a plan of action. Are they on a trajectory to exit out of SRBI so that intervention is no longer needed? THIS is our goal. These are the supports provided by our IST K-2, IST 3-5 and B.O.E reading teachers who are simultaneously serving as SRBI coordinators. How can we lay this work on our classroom teacher’s shoulders? By eliminating these positions, we are losing the structure that we have created to support students before the special education process begins, often preventing the need for a child to enter special education. This is the foundation of the Response To Intervention process we have thoroughly infused into our education system in the past 15 years.</p> <p>Fast Forward.....</p> <p>It is September 2020; for six months, students have been without the secure structure of a formal school day. They are reentering this world with so vastly different home experiences and educational gains and losses and have experienced individual and collected trauma. Teachers are motivated to take on their students however they arrive, they’ve been waiting for this day, but they can’t do it alone. Returning will be its own unprecedented event, but this time, classroom teachers and students must do it all without the expertise of the interventionists who they have relied on. There is no doubt that there will be gaps in development that cannot be closed by one classroom teacher alone. When they have questions about their students, who will they consult with? When they need to submit paperwork for a student who is substantially deficient, to whom will they turn? When a student’s need is above and beyond a teacher’s daily small group work and data collection is proving the next tier is essential (in a classroom of 25 students), how will the student receive the extra tiered instruction? How will the teacher close the gap without an expert in that area that is needed to further them towards their academic goals in these critical elementary school years? As Joseph Torgesen explains in the article Avoiding the Devastating Downward Spiral, the skill deficit between average and below-average readers can be largely erased with appropriate early intervention. Research proves our intervention is absolutely essential. A classroom teacher cannot do this alone. Without it, students fail because we fail them. The gaps which were already hard to fill, grow wider with less support.</p> <p>Our students deserve better. It is their right to be provided with the support they need. To give less in a time where we all need so much more will come with permanent consequences. We must give our teachers and students what they require as we navigate our school world once again.</p>
<p>Lisa Butler (203) 253-1044 lbutler@optonline.net lbutler@butlerassociates.com</p>	<p>How do we cut money from the school budget when the schools have been in need for several years?</p> <p>During these times when budget cuts are being looked at, I felt it was important to contact all of you who will be voting on and cutting budgets that directly impact education. I have two children in Stamford High School and over the last five years the school has built its reputation due to the leadership of Principal Ray Manka. Parents are now sending their kids to Stamford High School. They are “Choosing Stamford”!</p> <p>This is not the time to cut from the education budget. Enrollment is expected to increase with the closing of</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

Trinity Catholic High School, the closing of Stamford Academy, students that move into the district that are fleeing New York City New Yorkers flocking to CT, Realtors say and/or parents who can no longer afford private school. We need a strong public school system in Stamford. We need to maintain the same growth in our school buildings that we are experiencing in our growing city.

This is not the time to cut the school budget. The proposed cuts that would have a huge impact on the SHS community and students would be loss of our Athletic Director who has gone above and beyond what his job description entails. During the pandemic, Chris Passamano's role switched to making sure all SHS students had technology to be able to distant learn and food as 46% of our high school community are dis-advantaged. Chris goes above and beyond his everyday role in making sure the neediest students have their needs met, whether that be by enrolling them in the after school Athlife program or being a mentor to someone that needs that extra support. How could we even possibly feel that one AD, Dick Cerrone from Westhill could manage two schools. This would also be a dis-advantage to Westhill High School as well. The list of AD's responsibilities include: securing transportation to games, coach eligibility, working with the security team to ensure security measures are in place, assist with standardized testing, player eligibility, press/social media, Knight life which is a program that offers student athletes tutoring assistance to keep them eligible. So ask yourself, how would a school environment be vibrant with someone splitting these tasks among two schools?

The other incredible loss would be the Dean Of Students, Mr. Tom Agosto. Communication among the school community has increased tremendously with the newly launched monthly newsletter that Mr. Agosto sends. In addition, he was also an intricate part on revamping the successful "Shadow a Knight" program where 8th grade students would shadow a current 9th grade student to see if SHS was the right place for them. We can't lose the momentum on these initiatives put in place. In addition, Mr. Agosto's job would go beyond the normal hours to make sure that kids in need were mentored and had their needs met. Mr. Agosto also is also responsible for attendance and appeals, school honor ceremonies and honor roll, securing the school lunch grant to allow students to have meals after school, DOMUS knights, ensuring clubs and organizations in the school are implemented, 9th grade orientation and acts as the middle school liason.

This is not the time to cut the Athletic Director and Dean of Students from Stamford High School. We need to build on the momentum that was started when Principal Manka took over. We can't afford to go backwards! We need the community to rally behind these potential cuts and we need the Mayor, Board of Finance, Board of Representatives, and Board of Education to support the growth of Stamford Public Schools. We need **STRONG SCHOOLS!**

We want Stamford families to stay in Stamford. We want them to be active community members in our public schools. We want people to "Choose Stamford" because we offer so much. We can't go backwards, it will take years to get to where we are at now.

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

<p>Raji Sundararajan IST 3-5 Hart Magnet Elementary Stamford Public Schools</p>	<p>Respected Mayor Martin, Members of the Board of Finance, Board of Representatives, Superintendent Lucero and the Board of Education:</p> <p>Our district philosophy of providing an education that cultivates productive habits of mind, body and heart in every student is currently being challenged with the suggested serious cuts. Due to the suggested cuts students will lose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A sense of support when their struggles in reading are met by small-group instruction from a qualified and experienced teacher.• Self-esteem, risk-taking efforts, and a sense of success which are possible in small group instruction under the watchful eyes of their reading teacher.• The benefit of Scientific Research Based Intervention (SRBI) programs administered by certified reading teachers who can monitor their reading skills and adjust instruction if the students are not progressing.• The vital support of reading intervention which they will need in the Fall more than ever. Despite effective distance learning it is not a substitute for the routine of direct instruction. We can anticipate students’ regression and we need to be there more than ever in the Fall . <p>We are now asked, if the Boards can’t cut teaching positions, where else can the cuts come from? Can they come from-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The reallocation of the surplus of \$14 million from last year to the operating budget to offset the cuts and job losses.• The reallocation of the \$3 million that is ear-marked for the demolition of the old police station, which is not a high priority, and have the city continue to maintain it as is.• The Thanksgiving parade budget which results in generating overtime for other city workers.• Big spending items like Literacy How, and consultants for professional developments. <p>Additional funding sources through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increasing the mill rate of property taxes by 1% or 2 % since we are expecting an influx of population from New York where the taxes are much higher than Stamford.• All the union jobs in the city who could be asked to take a pay freeze too.• Funding from the CARES Act from which the State of Connecticut received \$1382 billion• New grants written and the existing alliance grant money (which funds some of the Instructional Support Teacher positions)• More economic stimulus money passed recently at the Congress <p>With all the above options available, it is premature to think of cutting reading jobs. Teachers do not deserve</p>
---	---


COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>to go through the “job cuts”, “pay freezes”, and “salary reductions” every year. Teachers are to be respected by the community for working with children, caring for their learning, and shaping them to cultivate productive habits of mind, body and heart. I urge the Board of Finance, Board of Representatives, Superintendent and the Board of Education to not cut teaching jobs or freeze teacher pay. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>Gabriel Israel</p>	<p>Good morning, Ms. Winterle and members of the BOE, I am reaching out to offer my perspective as a student on altering the budget toward library resources at Stamford high schools.</p> <p>It’s widely known and understandable that this unique time added to necessary ongoing projects, such as the P3, has made us take on risky decisions.</p> <p>Affecting the library, however, is not one of the wisest choices out there. Taking me as an example might clarify it. I found the Stamford High School’s Media Center to be a home for myself due to its unlimited source of knowledge and creativity. Although I couldn’t find all books I ever wanted to read, I developed an incessant desire for reading and discovered how books are enjoyable. Literature indeed opens one’s eyes to understand their surroundings. Finding good works, though, isn’t an easy task; library workers involved in the field are required to recommend, manage, and care for tons of books.</p> <p>Had libraries only focused on books and its business would be over a long time ago. Technology has never been more present in our everyday lives. SHS has taught me infinite possibilities that 3D, coding, and other forms of useful information are our future reality.</p> <p>With such a limited budget, a good administration is more than critical. Hard times come with even harder decisions. As a means to support all the stress and melancholy, I aim to offer my opinion upon financial matters.</p> <p>When I first started my AP Calc BC class, there were around 60 students split into 2 periods. Within a month, due to my teacher’s pressure, half of the students dropped out, but still, there were two distinct classes. My UCONN ECE Physics class started the 2nd quarter with 7 students only.</p> <p>Although a smaller class offers better studying conditions, a sacrifice of one-only space, such as a library, is more costly than sacrifice several teachers and classes that barely have students interested in taking them. Understanding I am not a certified professional, I urge the City of Stamford to analyze the impact involved in any and all of its decisions rather than just summarizing the money saved by sizing down a department that is unique in its function (as I have seen with other matters in BOE meetings I attended myself).</p> <p>I thank you guys for the time and effort concerning the best for our community. I hope you guys are all safe and well.</p> <p>Warmest regards!</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

<p>Candace Burke</p>	<p>I am a proud parent whose child graduated the Stamford Public schools successfully and was supported throughout the years by the district and many wonderful caring teachers. He is a successful working young man and I would like to think that the SPS added to his success through heartfelt teachers who cared enough to support when he may have given up.</p> <p>I have worked for the BOE and in my present jobs worked 20 years in many our the SPS buildings and I can without hesitation attest for the tireless hours teachers put in to support the success of our Stamford children. Not only do they care and give their all during the day, but on their own time afterschool and in their homes at night. That’s what teachers do!</p> <p>My message today is simple, but extremely critical to OUR FUTURE! Children are OUR FUTURE - why wouldn’t we fund their education adequately? We need educated youth moving into the workplace - It will be their turn to run this world! Invest in them now! Thank you, Sincerely,</p>
<p>Maureen McLaughlin-Martin</p>	<p>Lilyana was terrific! The webinar was very informative and designed to meet the needs of the learners. Thank you!</p>
<p>Christine Velazquez</p>	<p>Thank you and everyone who presented for the webinar. Please consider making these meetings possible to attend virtually, even when things go back to "normal" and they can be held in person. This would allow people whose work and childcare situations prevent them from attending in person to participate. The more we know as a community, the stronger we are.</p> <p>Thank you! Lifelong Stamford resident and mother of 2</p>
<p>Jennifer Freeda 60 5th Street Stamford, CT 06905 203-952-3296</p>	<p>To: Board of Finance Members Good Evening: Thank you for the opportunity to address the board this evening. My name is Jennifer Freeda. I have 2 daughters that went through Stamford Public Schools. My husband has a business based here in Stamford. We are Stamford homeowners/tax payers since 1996 and I am a public school teacher.</p> <p>The proposed budget cuts, will have a devastating impact on our students and the quality of their education. These cuts will have a deep influence on the quality of education that our children receive for years to come. It's not just class size, that is difficult enough, but cuts to Media services, the Arts and physical sports will be a negative consequence on our students and also directly impacts their ability to compete with students from districts that value the importance of a well rounded rich school environment.</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>I would also like to add that in addition to the effect on the education of our students, these cuts would lower the value of our property and the ability of businesses to draw employees to live here in Stamford. In other words, bad for everyone.</p> <p>Yes, these are difficult times, but given the burden that our teachers, families and students have already had with previous budget cuts and dangerous health situations made worse by not funding the repair and upkeep of our school buildings, this is not place to cut. To make matters even worse, these past 10 weeks our teachers and families have had to pivot and teach our students in a distance learning setting. They are working very hard to reach all of the students and educate them during these stressful times. Teachers and the families are desperate to make sure their children are able to learn to the best of their abilities during this crisis. These proposed budget cuts will only exasperate the long term impact on our students and school system as we move into a new school year not knowing what the new school year entails.</p> <p>Thank you for all the work you are doing. It's obvious that you take your work very seriously. For that I am grateful. This is a daunting job. Thank you for listening this evening and seriously considering the needs and impact on our residents. I know the board's goal is to help as many people as you can. I hope that this includes educating the youngest residents of Stamford.</p> <p>Regards,</p>
<p>Mr Georges Charles</p>	<p>Good afternoon,</p> <p>I wanted to share with all of you a letter I had recently sent to Dr Tamu Lucero, Superintendent of the Stamford Public School district. In light of the difficult circumstances regarding the pandemic I wanted to express my gratitude towards the school my son is attending and the special reading programs from which he has benefited. I ask you all to please read my letter attached. I understand there is a Board of Finance meeting tonight revolving around the future of some of the educational programs. I had signed up for this meeting and I hope I to have 3 minutes to speak. Thank you</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>A Parent's Education Experience During the</p> </div>
<p>Alexis Schwach, LCSW School Social Worker Westhill High School 125 Roxbury Road</p>	<p>I previously submitted a statement pertaining to the unconscionable decision to make such drastic cuts to the school budget in an attempt to appeal to the notion that the pupils enrolled in the Stamford Public Schools are not just my students, but they are your children as well as the future of our nation. Now I submit this statement with a different plea to appeal to your humanity; not just as a peer, but more specifically as a social</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

<p>Stamford, CT 06902 (203) 977 5616</p>	<p>worker whose role it is to provide as much support as possible to meet the needs of students and their families.</p> <p>Where we are already short-staffed, you are proposing additional cuts, despite Stamford’s platform of “mind”, “body” and “heart”. My position addresses all three components and then some, yet you seek to remove positions that are VITAL to student success. Without attention to the mental and emotional wellbeing of your children, how can you possibly hold them to high academic standards with the expectation of seeing positive outcomes when we have children who have a myriad of obstacles that encompass BASIC HUMAN NEEDS? What about our students who are so anxiety-ridden that they cannot even step foot in a classroom or moreover a school building? How about the students with whom I work who self-harm, mutilating themselves because they do not have the coping skills required to address the pain that they harbor? Or the externalizing student; the one who demonstrates a lack of control over their own behavior? Did you know that barely a week of the school year has gone by where there is not some sort of act of violence at our school? A fight, a robbery, an assault.</p> <p>Besides suspending or expelling a student, there are options to meet their needs that will encourage, rather than discourage, them from attending school. What if we built up internal strength by teaching capabilities to tolerate frustration, gain communication skills to enhance their interpersonal skills, bolster CONFIDENCE in themselves and create TRUST in those who have a responsibility to keep them SAFE?</p> <p>The CT state Department of Children and Families defines emotional neglect as the following – and please read carefully:</p> <p>“Emotional neglect is the denial of proper care and attention, or failure to respond, to a child’s affective needs by the person responsible for the child’s health, welfare or care; by the person given access to the child; or by the person entrusted with the child’s care which has an adverse impact on the child or seriously interferes with a child’s positive emotional development.”</p> <p>In making cuts to the education system, which is already hemorrhaging with no tourniquet in sight, what your proposal would be doing qualifies as emotional neglect. I am a mandated reporter as are all my colleagues in the school system, from the TOP DOWN. It is on all of us to care for, protect and support students who are in neglectful and abusive situations. The proposal(s) on the table are exactly that: neglectful and abusive. Whom do these cuts serve? The answer is NO ONE. Not families, not students, not staff and certainly not anyone who is looking for a bright future for this community at large. The propositions are, even further, theft. We are robbing our children of their right to a “free and appropriate education”. For some of our students, this is their ticket out; out of poverty, out of oppression, out of situations they are raised in, which they did not ask to be born into. Our students have dreams to be high achieving members of a global society who are capable of making positive contributions to the community, yet we continue to make concessions in the field of education. The decisions go far beyond salary freezes and positions being cut. These proposals are ACTIVE</p>
--	--

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>CHOICES to decrease the value of education and to hamper the wellbeing of your children.</p> <p>Please note that if every time I received a new student referral, request for voluntary support, additional special education students to my caseload, I reached out to inform you of the situation, just like me, you would be receiving nonstop communication at all hours of the day...and night. This student is in crisis, this student doesn't have a home and needs to be connected to resources, this student is in such a fragile state that they need to be hospitalized, this student is in a situation where police intervention is required....</p> <p>If you can so callously turn a blind eye to the ever-growing social-emotional needs of your children in a world that is too often unkind, let alone in the middle of a global crisis, I don't know how that can be perceived as anything other than emotional neglect. One thing is clear - while your wellbeing remains intact and you, as decision makers in positions of power, continue to make educational cuts at the cost of your children's mental health, you are destroying the future.</p> <p>I can't make you see what you are not willing to open your eyes to, so instead I implore you to trust the information provided by those on the frontlines, fighting to do more with less, every day, for the sake of this community. Without access to education that addresses individuals holistically, you are shutting off the light that helps guide your children's way. Think for a brief moment, where you yourself would be without your education...without the support of a caring adult...without the opportunity to pursue a dream. What a sad state of affairs indeed.</p>
<p>Laura J Dias, M.S., CCC-SLP Speech and Language Pathologist Toquam Magnet Elementary School</p>	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I know a lot of SPS staff are also wondering the answers to these questions.....</p> <p>Why not impose a small salary decrease to ALL city employees? That means garbage men, police officer, maintenance workers, administrators, janitors, fire men, etc.</p> <p>No person within our great community would say to layoff a human being so that we could enjoy celebrations such as the 4th of July fireworks, the Thanksgiving Day Parade, Memorial Day Parade, the Christmas show, etc.</p> <p>Why not cancel those events so that people that have been serving this community are able to remain employed?</p> <p>Thank you,</p>
<p>Adriana Lucero</p>	<p>Dear members of the Board of Finance,</p> <p>I am baffled and appalled by the cuts being considered to Stamford's education budget. Eliminating teachers and specialists?! Increasing class sizes?! I get that this is an extremely challenging situation with no easy or ideal solution, but what is being proposed cannot possibly be the best option and is downright unacceptable. Right now we are all being asked to make personal sacrifices- like staying home and wearing masks- for the greater good. We need to look at this issue in the same way. I read of the suggestion to cut everyone's</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>salaries by 8% and that to me would be a much better solution. Ideal? No, of course not, but it is a sacrifice that will do a lot more for the greater good if it means we can maintain current teachers, class sizes, resources, support, and educational offerings for our children. If a better solution arises, great. If not, please choose the one that spreads the burden more fairly and looks out for the best interests of our children and society as a whole. Please.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p>
<p>Brian Gaudet</p>	<p>Good morning,</p> <p>I am writing from three separate perspectives. I am a resident in North Stamford, a father to a 10 month old who will be going into the public school system, and a husband to my wife who works at Strawberry Hill. I have been listening to each of your meetings and felt the need to share my feelings.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I understand that cuts need to be made somewhere. And perhaps there is just a lack of transparency of what other departments are being asked to scale back but it seems like the onus is falling highly on the BOE. What are the other departments "chipping in" to help reduce the deficit? 2. Seemingly there will either be a pay cut to public school staff and faculty OR a loss of jobs for some. What I don't think is being considered is that if you think it is fair, and that (as one member on last nights call put it) the staff is "entitled" for not either reducing their pay with a cut or sacrificing THOUSANDS of dollars compounded over the years with a pay freeze, will ultimately count as a loss of faculty. All 17,000+ employees have lives that also require funds to make everything whole; shelter, food, clothing, childcare, insurance, etc... obviously the list goes on. My wife could work in another school district and make more money as it is, but now you are asking for her to sacrifice even more money... where is her motivation to stay? She loves the district, the kids, and the family of colleagues she has. However, if we can't afford to support our family something would have to give. 3. While I applaud you for wanting to keep the mill-rate stable, it will have some consequences not just to your budget. While keeping the mill-rate where it is helps the majority of Stamford residents, it disproportionately impacts Stamford residents who pay property taxes, work in the public schools and would be taking a pay freeze or pay cut. If you increase my property taxes by 4% it's an increase of roughly \$435 per year. If you freeze my wife's pay or reduce her salary by 7 or 8% (as Mr. Mannis so eloquently suggested) we lose thousands of dollars a year. <p>As you can see from that glaring fact you're asking some Stamford residents, who are already undervalued and underpaid, to sacrifice a HUGE amount of income. Not just this year or next year, but compounded annually over the years to come.</p> <p>I will finish with this - I have seen how year after year when a budget cut is required it seems to always fall on</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>the Board of Education. The facilities are falling apart, the school district itself does not have a good representation outside of those who know it intimately, and the staff and faculty continue to feel undervalued and overwhelmed by the lack of support from "Downtown".</p> <p>Would a 1% decrease in pay across all city employees cover this deficit? How about a 1% decrease of pay with all city employees and a 1% increase in mill-rate? Get creative. Don't let the burden of a poor budget fall on the backs of some of the most important workers.</p> <p>Thanks for your time, and I hope you do the right thing.</p>
Shelley Michelson	<p>Esteemed Members of the Board of Finance,</p> <p>Thank you for allowing me to address you this evening and thank you for the painstaking due diligence you are doing in setting this year's budget. As a long-term resident of the City, I sincerely appreciate the commitment of both the Board of Finance and the Board of Representatives to hold our taxes flat for this coming fiscal year, even as the Towns of Darien and New Canaan have pledged to reduce their respective mill rates.</p> <p>As a former member of your Board, I know that cuts are painful and this year, especially so. This is the reason that we must come together as a community and recognize that this coming fiscal year and perhaps in the ensuing fiscal year, our sacrifices are necessary and prudent. If directed by the Mayor with required amounts, department heads are best suited to decide where to cut and so advise the Boards.</p> <p>Disproportionately, all public comments I have heard in the last 2 hearings have been from the Board of Education sector. It is shocking and sad to me that several teachers have come before this Board and complained about possible decreases in their salaries and pensions at a time when many of us have lost jobs, are lining up at food pantries, cannot pay utility bills and are facing foreclosure. We need to teach our precious children that we are a community where some of us are suffering and need help and therefore sometimes we cannot have everything we would like to have.</p> <p>Historically, the capital budget has taken a back seat to the operating budget, with monies remaining in construction funds long after the required IRS temporary period during which proceeds must be spent or applied to bond redemption in order to maintain the bonds' tax exempt status. It appears that these accounts are not monitored properly. As a result, frequently, years after a construction fund should have been closed, the Board has been asked to consider a "re-purposing" of monies that were originally designated for other projects. This signifies that either these projects were not properly budgeted for or that they were unnecessary. We all have become aware over the past several years that our capital assets are wasting from a serious lack of maintenance. It is imperative this year that we only bond for projects that are absolutely necessary and that our estimates of the costs are precise.</p> <p>A silver lining of this pandemic has been the gift of time to subject our consideration of solutions to the school mold remediation or replacement projects to a proper and complete vetting of ideas and costs. We should not</p>


COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>rush to turn our public assets over to a private company. Our history of outsourcing school maintenance to private companies has been a disaster. In fact, the magnitude of any decision assigning our schools to an unrelated third party should be left directly to the voters, after due education by an independent third party, since it is they, ultimately, who will pay the price in dollars, health of students and faculty and quality of education.</p> <p>Thank you,</p>
<p>Yhatrid Algarin</p>	<p>It is unconscionable that budget cuts are being proposed. Why are our children paying the price? Is it not enough that they have experienced this trauma and more than ever will need supportive services and more so additional services . The board needs to look elsewhere for the cuts. The board should not be looking at the most vulnerable to make budget cuts. Plain and simple by doing such budget cuts, you are sending the message to our children in public schools that you DO NOT CARE . We should be adding funding, not cutting it.</p>
<p>Lauren Jones</p>	<p>I'm hoping it's not too late to send in a statement.</p> <p>I know a lot is unknown about the next school year, but I feel this should not include the loss of our teacher's jobs. As teachers, we have worked quickly and tirelessly to support the students through distance learning when the pandemic hit, and we should be rewarded for these efforts, not let go. If the Farmington School District was able to find funds to support their teachers, Stamford should be able to do the same. Teachers are needed more than ever to guide and support our students and the community during this challenging time.</p>
<p>Edna Roig, SLP</p>	<p>I would like to provide my opinion in regards to cuts proposed that will impact teachers and students. I am a special education specialized service provider. I have seen first hand how distance learning has greatly challenged myself, all of the teachers that I have had an opportunity to be in communication with and most importantly our students. Many of us have worked at least 10 hours on a regular basis as we immersed ourselves in brand new unknown territory. We self taught ourselves in these past two months as we tirelessly reached out to overwhelmed students and parents. We tried putting aside our own anxiety and burnout while we patiently guided our students and families. We used our own resources including electricity, WiFi, computers, telephones, teaching materials, and most importantly offered our services past the time that we were contracted to work.</p> <p>Many of our students need our support now more than ever as they continue to reach out with questions, confusion and in need of extra guidance. They need more and we are instinctively trying to give even more support to the point of burnout.</p> <p>I am not I favor of any pay freezes first off. Many of us did not qualify for stimulus checks, loan payment postponements, meals and medical payment reductions. Yet, we are still obligated to pay our bills as they</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>increase every year. Many of us who have part time jobs to support us could not attend them because of the pandemic and restrictions. Freezing our pay would simply be a devastation to us and it will cause great stress and hardship in our lives. We need to keep our moral up for our very needy students and this will be blow to everything we have worked for.</p> <p>Our students need to keep the special programs that exist for them without interruption. The students right now need more help not less help. Making cuts will impact students and teachers in a dyer way. Please do not consider this now.</p> <p>Thank you,</p>
Erik Persson	<p>To Mayor Martin and Honorable Board Members:</p> <p>We are the family of the SDE hockey association in Sweden (https://www.svenskalag.se/sdehockey-05) to which the Stamford Youth Hockey Association (SYHA) has an exchange program and we are writing to ask that you work with Terry Conners Rink (TCR) to keep SYHA’s home publicly funded. This year in February the SDE team and all families were in Stamford for a wonderful week of ice hockey and cultural interaction with the SYHA players and families. This is something that I and my family will have as a great memory for the rest of our lives. The hospitality of all SYHA families is something that warms our hearts greatly. Had it not been for the TCR and SYHA this would not have been possible.</p> <p>TCR has been a publicly funded facility since its inception 48 years ago. It has served not just as a recreational space to enjoy skating, but the home of SYHA, a non-profit organization, where thousands of kids have learned and loved the game of hockey for the past 47 years, starting as young as five. One of the great successes of SYHA is the affordability for families. Hockey is a costly sport and as such, it can be limited to only certain types of bank accounts. Due to the city supporting the facility,, SYHA has been able to make this sport a more accessible activity opening the door to individuals who may not have considered it before. We start with our Tiger Sharks Learn to Play level and recently, we began a program with The Waterside School exposing many underprivileged youngsters to the game of hockey.</p> <p>Not only has SYHA provided an affordable program, it has also helped cultivate friendship, camaraderie and a sense of family that goes beyond the borders of Stamford, CT and the United States. Since 1983, we have had an exchange program with a Swedish hockey club. Our teen aged players travel to Sweden where they stay in the homes of hockey players and their families. The Swedish players do the same. All involved are exposed to a lifestyle and culture not experienced by typical tourists. The players go to school together, and participate in a variety of activities developing lifelong friendships and an appreciation for each other’s culture and points of view. These are the intangibles that stay with kids well past sports and deep into life. None of these things would be possible without the support of the City of Stamford.</p> <p>We recognize that the city needs to make extremely difficult decisions when it comes to the budget and</p>

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

	<p>funding of programs; and TCR is willing to make adjustments as well. We only ask that the changes be fair to all involved. By cutting the funding of TCR you are essentially putting the rink out of business and shutting down SYHA. That would be devastating to so many families who are dedicated to our program.</p> <p>Please consider the offer that TCR is making that will adjust costs across the board, but allow for SYHA to continue to serve as an affordable hockey program that continues to thrive.</p> <p>We thank you for your time and your consideration.</p> <p>Best regards,</p>
<p>Karen Wenz</p>	<p>Dear Board of Finance:</p> <p>My name is Karen Wenz, a life long resident of Stamford, and am writing to express my support for full funding of the Recreation Department's Budget. The Recreation Department offers diverse recreational and leisure activities for the entire community, toddlers, preschoolers, school aged, teens, adults and seniors.</p> <p>All the program offerings are very affordable making them accessible to all. My grandchildren have been able to participate in swim lessons, dance lessons, cooking classes, fitness classes, school break camps and summer camps. Their experiences have been outstanding.</p> <p>The wide range of programs enhance and enrich the quality of life for all citizens of Stamford and deserve full funding.</p> <p>Thank you,</p>
<p>Andy Zeitlin Board President, Boys & Girls Club of Stamford</p>	<p align="center">  BOF.PDF </p> <p>Would you kindly distribute the attached letter to the members of the Board of Finance at your earliest opportunity? Thank you very much for your assistance.</p> <p>Regards, (I was unable to print this letter in the format provided. Cynthia)</p>