

Mistretta, Susan

From: Jennifer L. Richardson, PHIAS <jennifer.richardson@advancedconceptsinsurance.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016 4:00 PM
To: City Council - All
Cc: Weston, Karen; Carrier, Robert; Greenshields, Sarah; O'Connor, John; Ciotti, Dennis; Thibodeaux, Deborah; Nicolella, Joseph; Shanahan, Dennis; Gagnon, Jason; Arbour, Elaine; atlanticexcavating@comcast.net
Subject: Regarding tonight's City Council meeting and the proposed tax increase to cover school budget deficit

Hello fellow Dover Citizens,

My husband and I are both business owners in Dover to 2 separate businesses, residents and property owners in Dover and parents to 2 children who attend public school in Dover. I'd like to be able to attend tonight's meeting, but am not sure my schedule will allow. I'd like to reach out to each of you to ask you to consider some alternatives to raising the property taxes and would like for you to include my letter in the Citizen's Forum.

Alternative ideas to increasing the property tax rate:

- Annual resident fee - instead of increasing the property tax cap, what if we introduced a "head tax" for residents?
 - This ensures all Dover residents share in the funding of Dover schools. It can't just be property owners through an increase in the property tax cap. There are many renters in Dover who use the school system who should share in that cost.
 - Newmarket, NH used to have a "head tax" of \$5 to cover those kinds of costs so that non-property owners also contributed.
- Possible resident business fee. If you are a business in Dover, you pay a small flat fee annually. This would be no different than the fees assessed on taxis, liveries, vendors, etc.
 - This supports bringing and keeping a vital workforce - good schools bring educated and working families to Dover.

If this is put to vote and it's decided not to increase the tax cap, not to institute a "head tax" and/or business tax; then can the City of Dover and/or School board open up the possibility of private fundraising on a large scale level through crowd sourcing or GoFundMe?

If budgets need to be trimmed, where else can we trim? Our schools bring and keep an educated workforce in this area. One who produces for our businesses and buys locally. Young families look for good school districts and settle in those towns, buying property and contributing to our economic growth. If we do not have a good, competitive and productive school system, we can not attract that demographic.

Why is it that education often gets the first cut in the budget? Do we expect City Hall employees to buy their own office supplies, not get raises or take a cut in pay? Why then do we often expect our teachers to work on lower wages than other nearby towns offer their staff? Why do we expect our teachers to partially supply their classrooms with necessities?

We expect our schools and teachers to be competitive, get our children into good colleges, care for kids with special needs and keep our kids safe. Yet their funding is often lacking and put on the back burner. Partially funding them and restricting the good work that they do at the expense of our children and the expense of these hardworking professionals own wallets. If we are going to ask this of the schools and teachers, we better be prepared to do the same with the police, fire and other public services offered here in Dover. They are all intertwined and dependent on a successful workforce, citizenry and economy.

This is obviously an issue of great importance and we need to come to some sort of resolution to fund the School Department budget; however, is increasing property taxes the best way to do it? I implore you to consider alternative methods before putting this to vote.

- In the budget's current form, Dover residents would see their tax bills increase by \$1.14 per \$1,000 of property value. This would bring total local property taxes from \$26.61 to \$27.75 per \$1,000. One of the highest in the State.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to a successful Dover!

Jennifer L. Richardson, *PHIAS*

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Lavertu, Karen

From: Russell, Amanda
Sent: Tuesday, April 19, 2016 6:30 AM
To: City Council - All
Cc: Arbour, Elaine
Subject: Budget

Dear City Council,

I am taking this Wednesday council meeting off in order to do my Wednesday night job. It is my hope, as I've said publicly on multiple occasions, that our two elected bodies will work together to produce a budget that is closer to the tax cap figure.

I fully understand the weight of your decision when an override is anticipated. I hope all departments will work together to find any amount of savings. I am also hopeful that we might make this the year in which we stop discussing the tax cap as applied to each side of Locust Street independently. The City of Dover narrowly approved a cap and did not specify that it be applied to each department equally, but rather the entire city budget. I hope this will be the year Dover can look to the area of the budget with the greatest need and allocate money to it.

I anticipate the board, superintendent, and school business office will need to do more work on the school budget. I hope you will scrutinize all budgets. It's a team effort.

Amanda

To: Dover City Councilors and School Board Members

From: Tom Southworth, Dover resident and State Representative

Here are my thoughts on the proposed city budget.

I generally do not believe that a tax cap is a good way to manage a complex budget. Each year presents different challenges. Also, a tax cap is for the entire budget and does not have to apply equally to all departments.

In recent years the school side of the budget has fallen behind in many areas. Dover's per pupil spending is at the very bottom of the state and teacher salaries are not competitive with local districts. (See chart at end of letter.) It would be a step back ward to make large cuts in the school budget this year. I would like to see a long-term plan to bring Dover's school spending more in line with the state average. (Other department budgets are similar to comparable cities.)

I am a strong supporter of the new high school and see it as a great opportunity to revitalize the school system and attract families and business to Dover. Although I don't get calls, most of my neighbors are enthusiastic about the new school and feel that it is long overdue.

It is unfortunate that some non-residents and political groups have gotten involved in this year's budget process. Since this is an election year, any issue provides an opportunity for political posturing.

I looked at the state website listing teacher salaries and understood why some citizens are confused. It gives examples of salary levels, but does not show the schedules. The main weakness in Dover's schedule is the excessive number of steps (19) needed to reach the top. For example, after 12 years a teacher with a Masters degree in Portsmouth would earn \$80,507 while a Dover teacher would earn \$68,068 after 19 years. I've included a comparison chart on the next page.

I suspect that it may be necessary to override the tax cap this year, but in the end it will be under two million. Once the budget figures are finalized, it would be helpful for the residents to know how much of the tax increase is due to the override.

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Thank you for serving the community and working responsibly on community issues.

Salary comparison for local cities from NHDOE for 2015-16 School Year

	Steps	BA Step 1	MA Top	Top Salary	Average Salary
Dover	19	\$35,231	\$68,038	\$73,146	\$52,557
Durham	15	\$39,725	\$72,924	\$81,021	\$68,713
Exeter	10	\$43,050	\$73,252	\$82,955	\$73,544
Hampton	12	\$40,958	\$68,409	\$73,282	\$65,414
Portsmouth	15	\$41,783	\$80,250	\$83,406	\$69,714
Rochester	18	\$35,093	\$60,238	\$63,171	\$51,026
Somersworth	13	\$36,138	\$51,985	\$63,445	\$48,210