



BOARD OF ALDERMEN
CITY OF SHELTON
SPECIAL PUBLIC HEARING MEETING ON
THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025
MINUTES

MAY 14, 2024, 7 P.M.

AUDITORIUM OF SHELTON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL,
675 CONSTITUTION BOULEVARD, NORTH, SHELTON CT
Live-Streamed at www.cityofshelton.org

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Alderman Anglace called the Special Board of Aldermen Public Hearing Meeting on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 to order at 7:05 p.m. in the auditorium at Shelton Intermedial School. Welcome everybody. It is so nice to see everybody, it is like a reunion that happens every year. We certainly want to extend our thanks to Superintendent Saranich and to the staff here at Shelton Intermediate School for hosting this event for us as the City Hall auditorium is a little bit congested with old furniture we are trying to get rid of. Thank you very much for coming. With that we will call this public hearing to order. All those present stood and pledged allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Roll Call

Alderman John F. Anglace, Jr., President – Present (3rd Ward)
Alderman Eric McPherson, Vice President – Present (2nd Ward)
Alderman Anthony Simonetti – Present (1st Ward)
Alderman Porter McKinnon – Present (1st Ward)
Alderman Benjamin Perry – Present (2nd Ward)
Alderman Cris Balamaci – Present (3rd Ward)
Alderman Bernie Simons – Present (4th Ward)
Alderman Lorenzo Durante – Present (4th Ward)

Administration

Kellie Vazzano, Administrative Assistant to the Mayor

Alderman Anglace: A few housekeeping rules. If you wish to speak, please sign up with the clerk over to my right. Speakers will be called with elected officials given the courtesy of going first and then the speakers will be called in the order in which they signed up. You will have up to five (5) minutes for each speaker and Alderman Anthony Simonetti to my left will be the timekeeper. Comments should be directed to the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget. There will be a 10-minute break at the discretion of the Chair. Please refrain from applauding because we want to get out of here at a reasonable hour. Please direct your comments to the Chair and the Board and refrain from inter-audience dialogue. Please show respect for the process and each speaker's views.

1. BUDGET FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025

<u>ANTICIPATED REVENUES</u>	
Government Grants	9,310,089
Local Taxes	111,473,737
Other Local Revenue	13,382,653
General Fund Surplus	0
TOTAL ANTICIPATED REVENUES	<u>134,166,479</u>

<u>PROPOSED EXPENDITURES</u>	
Administrative Office	754,876
Employees Resources	8,554,716
Legislative	171,021
Board of Ethics	600
Elections	185,703
Inland/Wetlands	115,212
Economic Development Commission	75,300
Economic Development - SEDC	128,000
Planning & Zoning	614,058
Recreation	1,839,484
Probate Court	14,700
Elected/Appointed Officials	18,450
Conservation Commission	80,041
City/Town Clerk	489,850
Public Employees Appeals Board	200
Senior Center	485,344
Zoning Appeals Board	23,320
Corporation Counsel	242,270
Public Safety	131,470

<u>PROPOSED EXPENDITURES</u>	
Youth Service	241,110
Public Health	332,000
Building Department	423,799
Highways & Bridges	3,955,869
Road Repairs	50,000
Public Works Director	80,702
Engineering	454,657
Tree Warden	135,175
Recycling Program	67,302
Sanitation	3,160,161
Bus Transportation	3,745,500
Library	1,289,745
Debt Service	6,045,251
Utilities	2,878,250
Building Maintenance	1,742,346
Management Information Services	598,320
Assessor	679,975
Tax Collector	363,580
Purchasing	371,767
Public Risk Management	2,211,088
Accounting	697,853
Community Development	92,550
Miscellaneous	1,131,250
Outside Agency Contributions	387,350
Contingency	175,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES - CITY DEPARTMENTS	<u>55,906,941</u>

EMS Commission	122,317
Fire Marshal	368,018
Animal Control	382,422
Fire Department	1,215,175
Police Department	8,583,794

TOTAL EXPENDITURES - BOARD OF EDUCATION	<u>78,259,538</u>
--	--------------------------

TOTAL PROPOSED EXPENDITURES	<u>134,166,479</u>
--	---------------------------

PUBLIC SPEAKERS

Matt McGee

312 Huntington Street, Shelton, CT

I am a Planning & Zoning Alternate. I do not speak for my Commission or Board, I just speak for me. Every year we do this and every year I talk about classroom sizes, especially in the elementary school. I know we are getting dangerously close to averaging 28-29-30 kids in our elementary classrooms and I don't know how teachers can adequately teach with that many little ones running around. (audience applause). I say it every year. I see this as better long-term planning and this year it was unfortunate what happened. Every year this is my two cents. Thank you.

Alderman Anglace: Let's stop right there. I asked for your cooperation and asked that you not applaud. Are we going to be challenged (audience applause)?

Keri Paradis Fengler

14 Grandison Place, Shelton, CT

Good evening Aldermen. I stand before you today as a graduate of the Shelton Public School System and a parent of two children enrolled in the Shelton Public Schools and I am an elementary school teacher in a neighboring town. I am here tonight to emphasize the critical importance of fulling funding Superintendent Saranich's budget for the upcoming year. As you know, the budget was not fully funded last year nor has it been since 2018 and historically even longer. Last year, as reported in the *Shelton Herald*, Wayne Bragg of the Board of A&T stated that the Mayor's increase would not be enough to meet the needs of the Shelton Public Schools this year. At the time Mayor Lauretti stated in a *Shelton Herald* article that this was a possible, but not a probable, situation. Instead here we are and it became a probable situation as support staff and building substitute jobs were cut which necessitated the bumping of newer teachers in order to allow teachers with seniority to keep their jobs. This resulted in beloved teachers like my son's Language Arts teacher being moved out of her classroom after nine months of developing relationships with her students. Can you imagine how those children felt? Children with ADHD with anxiety, like my son, how they felt to come in one day and find that their teacher left. We cannot keep doing this to our children. The children in Shelton are the future of our town. We need to support Superintendent Saranich's budget fully in order to support the children of our town. Investing in education is not just an expense, it is an investment in our future. As Benjamin Franklin once said, an

investment in knowledge pays the best interest. By fully funding the Superintendent's budget for next year, we are ensuring that our schools have the resources they need to provide a high quality education to every student which in turn correlates to the success of our community. This includes funding for essential programs for teachers, for support staff, that our students need in order to be successful. It is easy to focus on the bottom line and look for ways to cut costs, but we cannot afford to continue short-changing our children's education. I urge you to consider the long-term benefits of fully funding the Superintendent's budget. Our children deserve the best possible education and it is up to you to ensure that they have the resources they need to succeed. Please, make the wise choice and invest in our children's future by funding Superintendent Saranich's budget for next year. Remember that the decisions that you make in this room will have a direct impact on all of the children of our community and the future of our community. Thank you.

Mollie Moe

23 Shagbark Road, Shelton, CT

I have been an educator for the past 16 years, a mental health professional, taxpayer, room parent and most importantly a mother. I am standing here with one of my two children who are currently in the Shelton Public School System and I feel a sense of déjà vu. I have been in front of this Board numerous times advocating for the same thing, for the budget to be fully funded. I am tired. I am tired of struggling with why I have to continually plead my case over and over for basic educational resources, personnel, updated technology and overall general funds. I fear that you are all out of touch with what is truly going on in schools today. The mere fact that the 2.5 million which was requested for the budget to function at a basic level was met with a counter of 1 million is truly disgraceful and insulting. Teachers, instructional staff, support staff are fighting an uphill battle. The true definition of an educator is a person who helps others learn ways to acquire knowledge while igniting a passion of lifelong learning. Before that can even happen, students need to feel safe, they need to be regulated, they need to be supported and they need to be valued. How is that done where there is continual personnel changes, teachers let go before the end of a school year, not enough support staff such as school counselors, social workers, school psychs in every building at every level. The education system that the current Mayor has mentioned in his 23-24 Fiscal Budget presentation that he, his children, siblings' children went through, his sister worked in, does not exist anymore. He made the statement, we think throwing money at the equation will solve it – it won't. People solve problems. My question is how do you solve a problem if there is no one left to work it out? What educator wants to come to a district that is continually underfunded with some actually being released before the end of a school year, where is the incentive? Low taxes are only a small piece of the puzzle when families are looking for a place to plant their roots. Education system is top on their list. How do we remain relevant and competitive if class sizes are outrageous, staff is at a minimum, schools don't have daily mental health support staff, the budget is continuously funded at the bare minimum and when do we stop giving the kids the bare minimum, but ask them to perform above and beyond? How can kids thrive in an environment that has set them up for failure? I won't even get into the lunacy of comments made by President Anglace last year about Special Education budgets, essentially being a scapegoat and taking away from mainstream

students, or be in a deficit with no way to pay. It was appalling that that was even in public comment. So I end with this, your constituents voted you into a position of power and accountability. They have spoken loudly, I may add, they want you to increase the educational allocation and it is your duty and obligation to listen to them. Our children, educators and future community depend on it. Thank you for your time.

Kathy Yolish

1 Waverly Road, Shelton, CT

Good evening President Anglace, Vice President McPherson and members of the Board of Aldermen. I come before you today as a concerned taxpayer, a retired Board of Education member of 14 years and a seasoned educator or 35 years in the Shelton Public School System, retiring in 2006. As a taxpayer, I am concerned that Shelton taxpayers could possibly face more than an 18.1 mill rate and it may end up being slightly under 20 mills. My reasons include:

- The general surplus fund is empty.
- There is a 2.5 million deficit in the Board of Ed healthcare costs as well as a deficit in the school budget due to underfunding budget requests over the past years.
- There is a \$500,000 deficit for the police pensions.
- There have been lost legal suits against fired police officers in which millions of dollars were awarded.
- A homeowner recently was awarded \$1.1 million in a settlement from the city for seized property.
- Most recently a new lawsuit brought about by a local longstanding business owner who was previously granted approval for his property development, only now to be denied.

Where is the money in the reserve fund? How will these lawsuits be paid out when there is no surplus or reserve? It is obvious that we are in serious trouble with a Capital T. How will this affect our credit rating in the future for bonding and capital improvements? As a recently retired Board of Ed member, the last four years serving as Board Chair, I can truthfully state that the Board has been, and still remains, transparent with their financial expenditures. Unlike the City budget, the Board of Ed has no ability to put dollars in a reserve account to help with unanticipated costs such as Special Education. If we ever came in with a budget that had a reserve amount we would be told to address the issue with City officials when it actually happens.

In 2020-2021 the Board of Ed asked for a 3.19% raise in their budget and received 0 increase. As a result, 23.5 positions were eliminated and as disastrous and devastating as Covid was, I might say it was somewhat of a blessing for the Board of Ed as we were able to keep the school system functioning with the American Rescue Plan monies supplementing our budget.

In 2021-2022 the Board requested an increase of 2.99 million and received 1.02%. The budget was then supplemented with Federal Grant dollars.

In 2022-2023 the Board of Ed requested 4.49% increase and received 2.04%. This budget was supplemented with Federal Grant money and retirement cost savings.

And in 2023-2024 the Board requested 7.15% and was allocated 2.99% which resulted in the elimination of 16 positions.

Presently the dollars are so scarce that the Board had to make a drastic decision as they voted to lay off 8 teachers and one custodian as of May 1st. Yes, there were teachers that did get laid off. For the last four years the Superintendent and Board of Ed have said repeatedly that if we continue to be underfunded we will be at the cliff and today I stand here to say to you, that we are at the cliff and only you can come up with a solution. The voters gave you the power because they felt confident that you have the tools to repair what our City and educational budgets need. You must understand that every time the Board of Ed is underfunded something has to go in order to keep the schools operating. It is not merely that the positions are not needed, but the fact that the budget must be no more than its allocation. Other than freezing expenses, the most obvious resources for saving is employee salaries, mostly teachers as they are the largest group. Please remember that if the monies spent are over the allotment, individual Board members can be held personally responsible for the overage and no homeowners policy or umbrella policy will cover the cost that they may be assessed. I don't think that there is any such penalty for any of the other Boards in Shelton or the Board of Aldermen. I might be wrong, but I don't think so. As a teacher, I just want to state that educators make every other profession possible. You would not be here today without an educator, a para-educator, a tutor, an administrator, a school counselor, a maintenance worker, school nurse, a superintendent. You are at the juncture of decision making. Hopefully you will do what is right and fair to everyone who will be affected.

In conclusion, I would like to present you with a challenge, I'm going to call it the Kathy Challenge. It is said that you don't know what it is like until you walk in another's shoes. So with the approval of our superintendent and administration, I challenge you to take the opportunity to shadow a teacher, a para-educator, a tutor, a maintenance worker or an administrator or superintendent for the entire day, from the very beginning when they start to the very end when they leave. If you take me up on this offer, I will personally give a monetary scholarship to a graduating senior or seniors of the Class of 2025 in your names. I know the school year is coming to an end very shortly, so let's set this challenge for the upcoming school year. The rate for the day will be determined by the pay of the substitute and I would be more than happy to be there with you. Thank you.

Diana Meyer
56 Maple Lane, Shelton, CT

Tonight I am here to talk to you about the healthcare budgeting. The City and School are on the same insurance and that, I believe, was done years ago, a wise idea because the more people you have on a plan, the more money you are going to save. Obviously it makes a lot of sense. What I didn't know until

I got on the Board of Ed in 2019 was that while the school staff pays for their health insurance, City employees did not pay. They were not paying for their health insurance. But in May 2023 they began paying. It was a lower percentage, I believe, than what the school staff is, and my understanding going forward is they are going to be paying at the same rate as everybody else which I think is a good decision because healthcare is the hot topic of troubles with every budget. So the healthcare insurance that Shelton has is a self-funded plan which makes it a variable expense and it makes it really hard for all of you to budget to figure out how much is going to be used, because the thing about this type of plan is if we don't have a lot of people using it, it is an inexpensive plan. I'm sure years ago when you went on this plan, it was a great way to save money. If more people start using the insurance, plus we have, as we all know healthcare costs are going way up, then it gets hard to budget because every year you don't know, you are going up and down. What I would encourage you to do is to look at some of the fixed plans rather than going on this variable track which would make it easier for budgeting. So we all know this year what happened, we have all read the papers, there has been a large overage in the health line item for not only the schools but for the City as well. I just want to remind you that last year there were a lot of us that mentioned that it was not being properly funded. I mentioned it at the Board of Ed, Kevin Kosty, who was an alderman, mentioned it, Wayne Bragg someone brought up earlier, he is on A&T. Wayne was a controller for Sikorsky for 20 years, he has done consulting, he taught MBA classes at UCONN, he does financial consulting, he has 30 years of experience in his field. Nobody listened to Wayne and actually at the time, in the *Shelton Herald* the Mayor actually said, and somebody touched on it, these are inexperienced people reacting to a possible, but not probably worse case scenario. Well, here we are. It happened. So what I would encourage you to do this year, and I was pleased to read in the Herald that Mr. Anglace, I believe, you were talking to Wayne Bragg and working with him and A&T is going to work with you guys to try to get this properly funded.

Next, I will move a little bit on to education because being an ex-Board member it is a topic that is near and dear to my heart. Every year we hear it. I talked to some of you one on one. It is the State's fault, it is the Fed's fault, it is the Unions, it is this one, it is that one. How much longer can we just keep pointing fingers. It comes back to us. Every town in Connecticut and city has this problem, it is the State, it is the Fed, it is the unions, but somehow they manage to make it work. I just want, maybe this year, that we can have everybody work together. Mr. Saranich is wonderful. I've talked to a lot of you one on one and you have all told me you like him, he is a Shelton guy and that type of thing. You have Amy Romano who is our Board Chair. She is held in high regard, I'm sure, by all of you. Mr. Oraziotti, I saw him here tonight, he is the head of the finance group. I really, really wish you guys would just sit down and work together. I know they presented to you in a long meeting, but I think there is some more discussion that can be had. The other thing I am concerned about, my daughter has long since graduated and we have heard this and I know you have had kids in the school system and maybe some of you still do, is that I feel like the education that the kids who are coming in is not the same education as our kids got. I worry, I know a lot of our kids are going to Yale, going to Harvard, going to these fantastic colleges, but what about the kids that are just coming out of high school and going into the world. That's is just what I would encourage you, to think about the kids coming in and making sure they have equal opportunity. Thank you.

Allissa Dempsey

72 Wakeley Street, Shelton, CT

Good evening. I have been a resident and taxpayer of Shelton since 2015 and an educator in this district since 2016. We moved to this town as newlyweds ready to begin our new lives in a fantastic new city. We grew up a few towns over and knew of the amazing schools, sports programs and communities here. I began as an intern in these schools and developed a love for this district after witnessing some of the best teachers in action. In January 2017 I began my first of many long-term substitute positions as well as tutoring here before taking a full-time position at Sunnyside School. In that first year I witnessed the start of our budget woes with pink slips going out to my colleagues. Since my time in Shelton Public Schools began, 93 positions have been cut due to the budget as of the start of this school year. Per the Board of Education's budget report for this year since 2017 our schools have seen a negative difference of \$12,390,000 in what they have asked for in funding but not received. Most of these were budget requests to remain status quo due to lack of funding in past years, not increased requests to fund other needs that had been neglected. Needs like Promethean boards that don't work or basic classroom supplies. Those expenses fall to the parents and educators unfortunately. This current school year I had to witness something that Connecticut Education Association referred to as highly unusual. Wonderful educators laid off at the end of April due to the prior year's budget request not being met once again. These teachers were robbed of witnessing their student's final growth, to finish the year with their kids and the students robbed of a trusted adult, they had built a bond with over the past year. As an educator this bothers me, but as a new parent this infuriates me. The Board of Ed stated that these cuts were due to the increased Special Education costs of students moving into the district, and yet the consistent underfunding of our schools had left us short-staffed in Special Education with these teachers, paras and tutors taking on caseloads of increased sizes and struggling to meet the IEP hours for each of their students. As a general education classroom teacher, I taught class sizes as high as 29 students in a testing grade with all different learning levels which is a task in its own right, but imagine a kindergarten teacher asked to handle the same class size with brand new learners. Switching from a teacher's point of view to a parent's point of view, these are not the only numbers that concern me. Our town has the lowest spending per student than any of our neighboring towns. Per CT.gov EdSight data for the 2022-2023 school year, Shelton spent \$17,911 per pupil. This is lower than Ansonia, Bridgeport, Orange, Seymour and Trumbull by \$500-\$1000 per student. Lower than Monroe and Woodbridge by up to \$2000 per student. Lower than New Haven, Oxford and Stratford by up to \$2,500 per student. Lower than Newtown by almost \$4,000 per student and lower than Derby and Milford by almost \$4,500 and \$5,500 per student respectively. As a mother of a young child living in a prosperous city full of businesses, restaurants, apartment buildings and condos around every corner, you would hope we would put some of those profits to use funding the education of our youth, our future generation. I believe my son deserves the best education possible, just as I am sure every parent and teacher in this auditorium feels about their own child and/or students and yet here we are at this meeting hoping and praying to be heard again as we once again beg for our funding needs to be met. The Board of Ed and our Superintendent work so hard and spend months looking for ways to create the best budget possible to

bring to the City each year in hopes of keeping the status quo. In actuality, status quo has been below our needs for many years now. We are at a point where teachers and parents can no longer handle this burden. As my family and I look to move into our forever home, this weighs heavily on my mind and leads to doubt as to whether or not it is worth staying in this town where education seems to be a lesser importance in budget talks. House prices are especially high in our town and without the guarantee of funded schools for my son's future, I just can't justify spending that type of money to stay here. I have worked with some of the best educators I have ever met across the schools of this district, but there comes a point where they too become handcuffed by underfunding and can no longer make up for the shortcomings they are left with. I beg you, as a mother that loves her son, as a teacher that loves her students and colleagues, and as a taxpayer that loves her community, please reconsider your proposed education budget for the 2024-2025 school year. Our district has already lost over 100 amazing educators and support staff members. We cannot handle another set of mass layoffs or program cuts and continue to maintain the level of education that we have been celebrated for. Thank you for your time.

Michelle Lucas

128 Coram Road, Shelton, CT

Good evening. I have been a literacy interventionist at the elementary level for the past five years here in Shelton up until this month when the budget crisis required a reduction in force. I want to share with you from my personal experience in the role why it is such an important position that would be critical to fund in next year's budget. Early intervention, especially in the primary years, prevents rising Special Education costs by providing students with the specific instruction they need to close those learning gaps. The work we do alongside of our amazing reading consultants prevents many students from requiring that individual education plan. The investment in interventions support in schools saves money in the long run. Without interventionists the classroom teacher would have to provide the tiered support and in classrooms which are growing in size this becomes literally almost impossible. Students will lose out on the opportunity to receive tailored instruction because of the distractions of a classroom environment. We are essential in helping our struggling at risk students to have access to learning at their level which has multiple benefits, including financial. On behalf of all of Shelton's intervention teachers, I ask you to urgently consider the loss that Shelton schools will suffer if we are unable to fund these important services for our most at-risk kids. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Martha Parkins

15 Serene Drive, Shelton, CT

I have spoken at these meetings many times before about my own children and how constant underfunding has hurt them. Today I am here to tell you about my other kids, my students, and how underfunding the Board of Education has hurt them. I am a math specialist at Elizabeth Shelton Elementary School. One of my main job responsibilities is to provide Tier 2 and Tier 3 support for students who are struggling in math. Tier 2 and 3 supports are provided to regular education students

who are identified through assessment data to be in need of additional support in math. These students receive 30 minutes of extra support outside of the 60 minutes of math instruction from the classroom teacher. In these 30 minutes I am able to review skills students have already learned, identify gaps in student's mathematical understandings and work to fill those gaps as well as support their current learning in the classroom. Students who are provided this intervention early and often can catch up to their peers and not require further services in their educational career. I began teaching in Shelton 18 years ago as a reading tutor. During that same time period Mayor Lauretti's own children were attending Shelton Public Schools. During these 18 years I have seen first hand the impact constant underfunding has had on our programs. When I first started in this district as a reading tutor there was one reading consultant, three reading tutors and five reading assistants, all of whom provided small group reading instruction to our students at one elementary school. Now at the elementary school I teach at, we started the year with one reading consultant, one interventionist, and one reading tutor. After the reduction of force due to the underfunding budget, we have one reading consultant to provide reading intervention to over 450 students. I can't even begin to describe the impact the lack of support has on our students, my kids. I call my students my kids, not because they are kids, but because they are so important to me. I greet them each day as they get off of the bus during my arrival duty. I hear about the games they played with their neighbors, trips to McDonald's, their improvements on their quizzes and their struggles. You see many of the Tier 2 and 3 kids that I see are part of our neediest populations. I help fill gaps not only in kids mathematical understandings, but also in meaningful adult connection. I am my kids biggest cheerleader, both in academics and their achievements outside of school. I spend my lunch period mentoring students. I connect with kids in the hallway, in their classrooms and during my intervention groups. When you take away my kids intervention, you are not only taking away their ability to succeed in academics, but also access to one of the caring adults in their life. For the wellbeing of our children, it is imperative that the budget is funded at the level requested by the Board of Education in order to keep positions like mine and my reading colleagues, enabling us to provide kids the support that they so desperately need. Thank you.

Ellen Thomas

303 Nichols Avenue, Shelton, CT

My son, Stafford, goes to Booth Hill Elementary School in Shelton. I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank all those individuals that work at Booth Hill Elementary School that have helped my son. My son didn't say "mom" until he was 3 years old. It just happened. Because of Mrs. Fieldman, because of every teacher at Mohegan Public School, because of Mr. Saranich, because of Mrs. Santilli, my son is at the top of his class. They spent years, years working with my son. At Booth Hill School it was Mrs. Veilleux, it is Mrs. Luyando, it is Mrs. Howley, it is all these teachers that are digging deep every day, led by Mrs. Marks who is absolutely incredible, working with Stafford every single day and he loves his school. The gym teacher volunteers her time, two times a week, to run a running club to have all the kids come before school starts and I am laughing because I cannot believe the level of dedication of these staff members to give up their time to show up before school starts to run a voluntary run club so that my son gets out that energy and is ready to learn. All those teachers, Mrs. Luyando is there every single

night that there is an after-school activity. Mrs. Marks dresses up in a costume for the Halloween celebration every year and gives out treats. You are saying, okay, great. It is great because what it does is it makes the children invested in their learning in a way that makes you as a parent feel secure, feel safe knowing that people love my son. People take care of my son, not because they are related to him, but because they are dedicated educators. We have been going now, my mom group and I, to these meetings now for only three years. I know there are some moms who have been here for 5, 6, 7 years. I am sitting here thinking to myself is that going to be me? Am I going to be here for 6 or 7 years asking for basic funding? I really hope not. I really don't think so. I know we can find a way to meet in the middle. I know we can compromise, I know no one comes here tonight deciding that they are not going to help kids. I know that is not your goal, I know that is not anybody's goal and I know that there is a middle ground that we can find. I'm not asking for the moon, I'm just asking for my kid not to be in a class of 30 kids. I'll take 25, we will figure it out. Mrs. Marks will figure it out. Parents will continue to volunteer. I am not willing to not put in my time. As a fellow educator in a neighboring town I understand the struggles of a budget and I understand that not every single need can be met at every hour. I understand that. I also understand that the bottom line is, when I think about my son's journey, and I think about those educators, I just cannot thank them enough and I cannot thank Mrs. Santilli enough. She sat in a conference room with me when my son was 3½ and she looked me in the eye and she said, your son is going to be a success and I am going to make sure of it. Mrs. Marks has sat with me in a conference room and said the same thing. Every educator has dedicated hours and hours to make sure that my son is successful in every way you can define it and he is. I'm just here to say thank you to those men and women every day who dedicate six hours to Stafford and because the difference is incredible. I'd like them to do it with a little bit more if that is possible. Thank you.

John Saginario

30 Hearthstone Drive, Shelton, CT

I appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight. Can you guys all hear me okay? Do I have everyone's attention, no one is looking down at their phone right now? Okay great. My son is in 7th grade right here at SIS. He had year after year a tremendous group of educators behind him. My daughter is about to enter kindergarten at Booth Hill and my wife and I seriously debated whether we were going to buy our new house here in Shelton because of the city's commitment to funding the schools. When my family first started looking for a new home in this area we toured houses in Trumbull, Monroe, Fairfield and Stratford and much more. While we were driving through Shelton one day with our realtor, we asked, what is this place? This is Shelton she said. Why don't we look at any houses here my wife asked? Our realtor told us with a flat tone, you don't want to live here. It is a city that is not known for its school system. That is what she told us. A young family just looking for their first house. But in those words, she wasn't talking about the dedication of our teachers or the staff members or the quality of education those individuals strived to provide. She was talking about the city's leadership and its chronic underfunding of the city's school system. Perhaps, more importantly, how little Shelton seems in the perspective of some would be home buyers to value its education system, especially compared to its neighboring communities. That is the real tragedy here. I have a hard blunt truth to share with all of

you. The older generation of taxpayers who don't have children in school any more and are more concerned with low taxes than whether teachers get fired, won't be here forever. They are not Shelton's future. The young families are. The young people who live here are. They are the ones that will shape that future and they demand a strong, well-supported school system. You are literally investing in the future, the future leaders, business owners, police officers, town clerks, entrepreneurs who will carry Shelton forward. Aren't they worth it? I wanted to share some information because I did not grow up in Connecticut so I did not get the benefit of Connecticut's public school system. I grew up in Ridgewood, New Jersey, which is a fairly well funded education system. As I understand it, Shelton is approving about \$78 million to fund the schools, well short of the \$82.2 million that the schools have asked for. By comparison, my town of Ridgewood, New Jersey, where I grew up has a total budget that comes out to \$138.5 million. The budget adds brand new schools including Cybersecurity, AP African Studies, American Sign Language 3, meaning there was 1 and 2, Fashion Design 2 and much more. That came with a cost of an additional 2% raise in taxes which amounts to about \$18 a month for the average family. That's not a whole lot of money. Ridgewood, New Jersey is a town of 26,000 residents. We are almost double that size. So considering how much we are asking for, it is really not a lot. To our distinguished Board, I ask that you please fully fund the upcoming education budget and to Alderman Durante, expect a phone call from me. Thank you so much.

Sandra Fernandes

27 Millbrook Road, Shelton, CT

Good evening everyone. From January 2022 to April 2024 I was a building substitute at Perry Hill Upper Elementary School here in Shelton. In addition to working in the district, I am a former student and life-long resident of Shelton. I am pursuing a degree in education and I have been hoping to work here in Shelton. I loved working at Perry Hill and I have been looking forward to a potential future career in the district. Unfortunately, in April, all building substitutes in the district were told that their positions had been eliminated due to a \$2.7 million deficit in the districts budget. At the April Board of Education meeting it was officially confirmed that there would be layoffs as a result of this deficit. Effective May 1st, myself, three other building substitutes and two general education teachers were laid off from Perry Hill with only six week left of school. I do not know the exact number of building substitutes, tutors and teachers who were laid off throughout the district, but with six people laid off in one building, I can only imaging how many jobs were affected by this. In addition to this, many interventionists either had their positions eliminated or are being used to cover the classes that have lost teachers, which is removing a special needs service that many students rely on daily. To my understanding, the goal is to eliminate positions that were the least disruptive to student's day-to-day education experience. By removing all building substitutes and any general education teachers, the students were completely thrown off. There was now no coverage for specials teachers who were either out sick or being used to cover general education. Those specials now have to be cancelled, meaning that students are not receiving a fully rounded education. In addition to this disruption, the general education teachers who were left had their prep periods taken away, meaning they either have to take their work home or let their grading suffer. While I have my thoughts on the people who were most affected – specifically those of us that

lost our income, our source of paying rent, paying bills, raising families and so much more – I think it is imperative that we recognize that this is now a district-wide issue. Between the students and the remaining employees and those who lost their source of income, how many lives are being affected by this deficit? Without proper staffing, what kind of education can we offer these students? Between missing staff members and burnt-out teachers, what kind of students are we putting out into the world? People are a resource, do not forget that. The current deficit is, according to the Board of Education, a result of special needs costs and healthcare costs. Both of these are not only legally required costs, but they are uncontrollable costs. Everyone deserves healthcare and every Special Education student deserves to have their needs and services met. The Board of Education should not have to debate staying within their allotted budget or meeting student's needs. It is clear that the City has not been providing the district with the budget required to properly fund the schools. From colleagues to the Board of Education themselves, all we have heard is that this deficit was a long time coming. To my understanding, if the budget is not increased, the budget will only grow exponentially next school year. When the budget is being decided on, I encourage those of you responsible to consider the impact that this deficit has had on the students, the staff and the education system as a whole. I encourage those of you responsible to consider the value of a fair, well-rounded education system. Fully fund education. Thank you.

Andrea Adimando

12 Golden Hill Lane, Shelton, CT

Hello Board of Aldermen members and members of the Shelton Community. I am the parent of a kindergartener and second grader in the Shelton School System. I am here today not only as a parent, but also as a mental health professional and as an Associate Professor at one of our Connecticut state universities. I am to ask you to reconsider your insufficient proposal for next year's budget, as I fear, and know, that it will have ramifications for our children in countless ways. In my past 18 years of practice as a psychiatric nurse practitioner and school consultant, I have seen first hand the effects of overcrowded classrooms, teacher burnout and insufficient mental health and social work staff within the school system. The effects are devastating and have led to a crisis in our mental health system and especially in our Connecticut emergency rooms. Children who have significant emotional or academic needs are not able to receive the care and attention they need without adequate staffing. Teachers, psychologists and school social workers are currently experiencing high rates of burnout related to overcrowded classrooms and feeling unable to fully help children with these significant needs. I have seen countless educators in my practice who were on the verge of suicide due to the enormous stressors of their jobs, feeling like their pleas for help and funding are falling only on deaf ears who don't know what it is like to do their jobs. This will worsen significantly if your underfunded budget proposal goes into effect. As a professor at SCSU I have also seen the results of children being pushed along, grade by grade due to poorly funded schools, overcrowded classrooms and insufficient mental health staff and the results have been horrific at best. At the university level, we are seeing students who are unable to form or write basic sentences, much less college level papers and require significant intervention to reach their potential. As a parent, I have seen teachers overworked and over-burdened. Field trips and

activities cancelled for lack of funds. Teachers without paper and basic classroom supplies, using their own money from their insufficient salaries to provide snacks for needy students and supplies that are basic necessities for children to be able to learn. It is estimated that more than 50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years. This will only continue to worsen if you push this budget forward as their burden will continue to grow. Your budget also sends a message that the work they do isn't important and that they should do even more with less. Our children don't deserve this. They deserve educators who are compensated fairly and have reasonable class sizes, adequate support staff and a spirit that isn't broken by constant fear of cuts and disappointment. It is no secret that most of the Board of Aldermen members identify as Republicans. It is also no secret that the Republican party has been stereotyped in recent years to be the anti-education party, consistently pushing for cuts and gutting of education services, both federally and locally. I implore you as a parent, a mental health professional, and an educator, prove this wrong. Show the world, and most importantly our City, that not only do you value our educators and our children, but that you understand the fact that education is power, that by providing appropriate educational and psychological support to these students, you are, in fact, nurturing and growing your future leaders, doctors, nurses and teachers. These students will be the people who will be watching over you and your loved ones in your hospital beds, advocating for you in our judicial system and running our City. A cut to their education is a cut to our state, our cities and your own future. Thank you.

Alderman Anglace: I do not think it is productive for people to clap while the speaker is speaking, it is impolite, we can't hear here and something may not be recorded. All these speakers are being recorded and it is going to be tight and we are going to get the opportunity to read it, so please don't make any background noise and give the speaker a chance to be heard. Thank you.

Jessica Myers

27 Country Ridge Drive, Shelton, CT

I was at this meeting at this time last year and I remember many of you asking about what those fully fund the Board of Education signs that were all over the city meant. They were a plea to give our schools what they need to thrive. As we can see now, that didn't happen and it is costing us. Regrettably in recent weeks we have witnessed the unfortunate repercussions of under-funding. In the past few weeks we have had to say goodbye to some amazing educators and it has been heart wrenching. I am sure many of you here saw the tears as kids found out that their favorite teachers wouldn't be coming back. These educators gave their all for our kids every day and it is a shame our City's leadership does not see that as the investment it really is. Last year we warned you that there was going to be an issue. Taxpayers, Board of Ed, teachers, parents, students, we all spoke up at that meeting, but alas it fell on deaf ears. Now, here we are again facing higher taxes in a school system that is about to be seriously short-changed unless we do something about it. Stop cheating citizens out of their taxpayer dollars by wrapping up legal bills with lawsuits that benefit no one other than the attorneys. Let's not forget, any future legal battles that may arise out of these cuts that come up because staffing needed does not comply with IEPs. I acknowledge that the Federal and State government should contribute more to

educating funding, but they are falling short. Our City must step up and cover these gaps just as we do with our personal budgets when the district fails to provide necessary supplies. Many of us take from our own household budgets to supply classrooms and nurses offices with basic necessities like paper towels, tissues and hand sanitizer. We need you to give our kids the basics. Safe classrooms, enough teachers and the tools they need to learn in today's world. We need to do it together without passing the buck or playing the blame game. Our City's future depends on it so let's get it done. Thank you.

Melissa Addario

7 Hazel Court, Shelton, CT

I have two children that attend Booth Hill Elementary School. My daughter, Ayla, is in 2nd grade and my son, Alex, is in kindergarten this year. Last year I was one of the many that stood here asking you to fully fund the Board of Education budget, which a few of you seemed confused about what that meant, and here we are, one year later with only 30 days left in the school year and you are handing out pink slips to teachers. I say you are because it is due to your decision not to fund the budget properly that this happened. This financial irresponsibility cannot be sustained. I know the Board feels good that they didn't have to completely disrupt our children's lives by removing homeroom teachers, which would have been devastating, but when you remove instructional support, students' educations suffer. It is extremely disappointing and upsetting to know that none of this had to happen had you listened to the Boards and parent's pleas to fully fund the budget for education and healthcare. You keep trying to stretch the minimum to maintain, but all that does is push the inevitable off another financial cliff. Mrs. Lopes was one of the teachers let go and she was Booth Hill's wonderful interventionist. My daughter worked with Mrs. Lopes two days out of the classroom and one day in the classroom. My daughter trusted and enjoyed her time learning with Mrs. Lopes and had some much growth since working with her. Now that development has been cut short. Mrs. Capozzi was helping my son's class with their kindergarten celebration concert when she was abruptly let go. She would teach the kids sign language which my son really enjoyed. Alex was very concerned about what was going to happen now. The kids don't understand, nor should they, but it is left to the teachers, the principal and parents to stay strong for the kids and try to smooth over this mess. Anthony Simonetti had said, the City is ready to assist, especially in emergency situations. I think the City needs to set their priorities straight on what constitutes an emergency situation. President Anglace said last year on May 25, 2023, the party would evaluate and revisit the fiscal needs at the time the state would know Shelton's Special Education money, the parties would then sit down once more to analyze the Board of Education's needs and provide the board with additional and financial commitment. These all seem, based on what just transpired, to be empty promises that hold no weight. We were given less than half of the \$5.3 million the Board sought after the past year. If the schools were funded as requested, we would not be having these issues. This was pointed out on the April 24th Board of Education meeting I attended a few weeks ago. When I was at the meeting, Amy Romano stated how they couldn't have known this was going to happen with the Special Education needs. However, based on the proposal the Superintendent Ken Saranich gave at the budget meeting last year, you were aware of increasing of the Special Education needs. There has only been an uptick in the needs of the children, especially since Covid. There has been 20 plus years of

neglect to the town of Shelton on so many issues other than education. Board of Aldermen your silence is heard loud and clear. It does not seem as though the City values our teachers, students, administration and parents among others that make up our community. The ones suffering are our children of this town and the wonderful teachers. They are trying their best to educate with limited resources. Mayor Lauretti's budget proposes only \$1 million increase to the present \$77 million school budget. The school board requested \$82.2 million. We are so far off. With the road we are heading down with the budget, if the budget is not fully funded for this upcoming school year, there will end up being more layoffs that we can't afford. The schools are at bare bones. Class sizes are at what should be the max. They should not be allowed to grow more than they are right now. Heading into the 24-25 school year your irresponsible and neglect will continue to cause our children's education to implode of this budget is underfunded again. With more layoffs at risk, class sizes are sure to grow. My son's kindergarten class is already teetering at 24 students, which is too large, especially since there is no helper there to assist the teacher. What will happen next year as more kids move into the district over the summer, with all the new buildings happening all over Shelton? Anything over 25 students in a classroom with one teacher is ridiculous and unfunctional. This happened last year with my daughter's 1st grade class having 30 kids. You could not move around the classroom easily amongst all the desks and it was not easy for the kid's needs to be heard. We cannot go back to that.

On another note, I was at a store and while I was checking out there was a husband and wife talking to another person in line. Their conversation was about how they moved to Shelton because the taxes are low, but made sure they waited to relocate until they finished raising their family in the Trumbull school system and went on to say how much better that school system is and how they would never have had their kids go to school in Shelton. This is what people think. Shelton is okay to live, but only after you no longer have a family with kids at home needing to be educated. We should be proud to have our kids being educated here in Shelton and not feel inferior to the funding of education provided in surrounding communities. Aldermen, please stop putting your heads in the sand and try something new. Properly fund the Shelton schools based on the information and feedback provided to you. You really need to reflect on your purpose and ask yourself why you are here. If you do not want to do this job then step down for someone with strategic ambition who does. We should be wanting the same things here like supporting and guiding our next generation to thrive and succeed. Thank you.

Michelle Eckler

17 Grove Street, Shelton, CT

Good evening. I am Dr. Michelle Eckler. President Anglace, Vice President McPherson and members of the Board of Aldermen I come to you this evening for the second year in a row as a concerned parent and citizen. Last year I spoke to you directly about the impact that a lack of school funding would have on my children and I shared stories about how my two boys have done well despite your continued lack of funding to the Board of Education. While that continues to remain true, today I am not here to talk about my kids. Instead I am here to say one thing to you. Do better! President Anglace, on May 25, 2023 you entered into the record the following statement regarding the Board of Education budget.

“Tonight, the Board of Aldermen will pass the mayor’s budget based on the premise, agreed upon by the Superintendent of schools, Ken Saranich, and the mayor, that the board of education finish out this fiscal year and then the parties evaluate and revisit their fiscal needs. At that time the State will know Shelton’s share of ECS and special education monies. Then the parties will sit down once again to analyze the Board of Education’s needs and provide the board with an additional financial commitment.” You clearly knew, regardless if the State had, what you refer to previously in your statement as an unfunded mandate, that the City of Shelton and its Board of Education has an obligation to pay for Special Education costs for its students. You even went as far as to state that after an analysis of needs that more of a financial commitment would be provided. Yet, where are we now? My kindergartener is on his second teacher of the year in his regular education class. My 4th grader is on his fourth regular education teacher of the year. Due to recent cuts the Board of Education has had to make because this Board of Aldermen did not live up to their promises. I continue to be disgusted with the way that you have talked about Special Education. In your 2023 budget statement you also stated, “Either they take the money from the mainstream students or they run up a deficit and they have no way to pay.” How dare you place the blame for underfunding on the backs of our most vulnerable population of students. You are obligated, under IDEA, to provide a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities and ensure Special Education and related services to those children. To be perfectly frank, the statements you have made over the years have been highly offensive and borderline discriminatory against students with special needs. Vice President McPherson, I came with receipts tonight. On May 24, 2023 I wrote to you regarding the need to fully fund the Board of Education budget. On May 25th you responded to me as follows: “The Mayor and Superintendent Saranich met yesterday morning and it was a good meeting from what I have been told. The budget will be voted in today. Please keep in mind that when the budget is adopted, there is about five weeks until it takes effect on July 1st. During that time we will have a better handle on what amount the State will be giving the cities and towns with regard to ECS and SPED funding. BOA President Anglace has informed me that the Mayor and Superintendent will have additional meetings. He also discussed with Mr. Saranich on behalf of the aldermen the issue of the overcrowding, though not system-wide the situation needs to be resolved. Mr. Saranich stated he would work to resolve it. Once we adopt the budget we will still be working with Mr. Saranich and the Mayor. The Mayor stated in his budget address that there are additional things the City will do to help the BOE. I believe things will work out. Again thank you for your email and attendance at the hearing.” This is yet again another broken promise. Mr. McPherson, your email clearly stated that they City had additional things that could be done to help the BOE and yet where are we now? Down eight teachers and a custodian and our lowest paid employees of the district are being forced to take a day without pay to make up for a deficit that this Board of Aldermen created with your lack of funding. It is your job as members of the Board of Aldermen to pass a budget that, according to the City Charter, provides for the preservation of order, peace, safety, health and welfare of the City and its inhabitants. The inhabitants include every child that lives in this City, including our students with special needs. Failure to pass a budget that will allow the Board of Education to maintain current services is in direct violation of your powers and duties as a member of the Board of Aldermen. It is about time that you stand up as public servants and do what is right for this City and its inhabitants, instead of what

is best for your political standing. I call on you to do right by the children of Shelton regardless of their abilities.

Joan Pisani

7 Webster Drive, Shelton, CT

Good evening. My husband and I have made Shelton our home for almost 40 years. I have what I think is a unique perspective regarding the lack of full educational funding for our schools here in Shelton. Not only do I have two grown daughters who went through the Shelton school system and three grandchildren, the older two currently attend ESS and Perry Hill, I am also a substitute teacher for the district. I retired from my full-time job in the corporate world in 2022. I decided it would be good for me to work part-time, but I wanted it to be in a totally new field. During the fall semester of 2022 I started to work per diem as a sub for the teachers and professionals at all the elementary schools in Shelton as well as the high school. Except for volunteering for reading, health and field trips back when my daughters were little, I had no previous experience working in education. It was an eye opener to say the least. I have enjoyed working with the kids very much, but I now understand how difficult it is to manage a classroom and get the kids through their daily routine with all the issues that can come up on any given day. Each class is a group of unique individuals with different needs and skillsets. I have become acquainted with the teachers, paras and all the other school professionals who supply direct services to our students. I am continually impressed and inspired by their competence, dedication and the way they care about the kids. I believe the classrooms have become more and more challenging for teachers through the years. When my daughters attended ESS the class sizes were smaller and more manageable. Now the class sizes are larger and so are the academic expectations for each grade level. We cannot afford to lose more personnel in our schools. We cannot increase class sizes. Many of our classes are topping out at 20-25 kids which is high enough as it is. Behavior issues have become more prevalent. Managing classrooms, achieving learning goals while keeping up with procedures and documentation has stretched teachers thin in our current classroom sizes. School is not just about academics though. It is also about kids learning to show respect, empathy, team work, getting along with their peers and also the all important learning how to cope. The teachers need support personnel in these areas as well. I am asking the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen to please give careful consideration regarding fully funding the budget. Support for our teachers is support for our children. Thank you.

Jake Wilbur

37 Canfield Drive, Shelton, CT

Hello. I am a fifth grade student at Perry Hill School. I am devastated about what has gone on this past week. I am aware that a lot of teachers and staff members have gotten laid off and I think that is absolutely unacceptable. I take an enrichment class with Mrs. Catone and have done it for the whole year, but now I barely do it anymore because Mrs. Catone needs to be a substitute. We need more substitutes for the school now because most of them are gone. My goal is to go a great college and have

no problems. Now, I am not sure about this because of this. I hope that this does not affect my ability to have a great education. I also think that this is not fair for the teachers. I think it is because most of the teachers that did get laid off were the ones that had just started being a teacher and now they have to look for new teaching jobs in a different city or school. It is harder for them to take days off since we don't have as many substitutes. Also, special groups of students who need help on certain things or more challenging things have barely been happening because of this. Now all of those teachers will have to be substitutes and they cannot give students the help they need. In conclusion, I think that all of this should not be happening and that teachers, students and parents do not deserve. Please fund the Board of Education budget so we can have the teachers back that we need. Thank you for your time.

Sara Wilbur

37 Canfield Drive, Shelton, CT

Good evening. I have a seventh grader at SIS and Jake is my son, a 5th grader at Perry Hill School. I am here tonight to ask that you fully fund the Board of Education budget request. I stood before you last year to ask for the same request. Unfortunately the budget was not fully funded and on May 1st teachers were let go to cover the deficit. This is detrimental and will only get worse if next year's budget is not fully funded. At the May 18, 2023 Board of Aldermen meeting, at the 21 minute mark, Mr. Anglace said, "for the last 3-6 months we have been watching the trend and communicating the trend the way the deficit goes. We have never went down to a deficit in Special Ed but we are self-insured on the insurance in both the City and Board of Education and these are issues that we are running into. We think the health issue will correct itself, but we have to manage it and work together to correct it. We have to be aware." Well Mr. Anglace, now is the time to be aware. The issue is not correcting itself and we need to work together to correct it. I implore the Board of Aldermen to challenge the Mayor's budget request, review line by line, does it really make sense to ask for year over year increases in line items that have yet to meet this year's budgeted number. Last week I worked the plant sale at Perry Hill School. What a glimpse I received into a day in the life of our phenomenal teachers. I challenge you to spend a day, even a few hours, in our schools, especially after the May 1st cuts. Our amazing teachers are spread so thin, running between classes and trying to manage 25+ kids without the help from paras or other teachers. This is not fair and totally avoidable if we fully funded the Board of Education budget. Look at the sea of orange signs in the room tonight. We are all asking that you have it in you to do what is right and fully fund the Board of Education budget. As a relatively young, concerned, hard-working mom of two school aged children, looking to ensure my kids get all that they deserve, I am asking you to find a way to fully fund the Board of Education budget. Now, imagine I am an 85-year-old man standing here tonight, does my act have more of an impact. I sure hope not. Please do what is right for Shelton.

Mark Holden

275 Soundview Avenue, Shelton, CT

People look at all the new buildings in our City and think of the tax revenue that they generate. The reality is most of the residential construction isn't generating enough new taxes to cover the cost of

services that the new residents require. There was a time when Shelton purchased open space because it was like buying an annuity. One purchase prevented a development estimated to generate an additional \$88,000 a year of tax revenue. But the cost to educate the students that we expected to live in those homes would have been \$288,000. Buying the property also avoided having to plow an additional road and collect the trash from those extra houses. When it comes to development, too much of a good thing is still too much. It is putting pressure on you to raise taxes to meet the needs of our citizens. Our Police Department hasn't been allowed to grow to keep up with our population. Many of our police officers are now at a point where they qualify to retire. We should be budgeting extra money to train and hire new officers. The healthcare budget proposal was inadequate two years ago. A year ago, the least experienced member of the Board of Aldermen, Kevin Kosty, who should have been the least informed, told you the healthcare budget was inadequate and you ignored him. He was right. You are still looking at an inadequate healthcare budget. The Mayor said changes will be made to the program, but near as I can tell, no effort has been put into that and it won't be easy to get the various bargaining units to agree to a reduction in coverages. The proposed budget leaves the Board of Education with more than a \$4 million shortfall. They have had incredibly lean budgets for many years. Looking at the numbers, I am afraid they could lose 10% of our teaching staff. The vote you make next Thursday could literally be decimating our educational system. This isn't an election year, but the school year you are funding now will end in June of 2025, an election year. That fall, as you are running for reelection, the State will release results of the standardized tests that the students take every year. Those tests will reflect on the resources they are allocated, not just for one year, but for past years. Shortly after that, the State NCEP report will come out and once again it will document the fact that we provide one of the lowest budgets per pupil in the State. It is going to be ugly. Parents and grandparents will see how we compare to other communities and know that the war on education you are helping to wage is continuing. The Board of Aldermen is charged with fiscal responsibility and you should be funding the kinds of things I have talked about tonight instead of multiple lawsuits caused by personal vendettas and over-inflated egos. I encourage you to do the right thing for our City. Thank you.

Nicole Azimov

7 Mount Pleasant Street, Shelton, CT

I have been a homeowner and resident of Shelton since 2012. Tonight I come to you as an outraged parent. I have a 1st grader and a 3rd grader at Sunnyside Elementary School. My daughter lost her beloved 3rd grade teacher in the recent teacher layoff – yes homeroom teachers were laid off. I had to tell my 9-year-old that the teacher she has grown to love over the past eight months would no longer be her teacher and a new teacher would be coming in, a stranger essentially. You can imagine the tears and questions that followed. As an adult this is hard for me to wrap my head around. Imagine the irrevocable damage your lack of funding of the budget last year did to these poor children. Additionally, my daughter and her kindergarten in 2020, I am sure all parents and teachers remember what that was like. She began her school journey in a mask, coming to school just two days a week for half days to eventually be fully remote learning for over two months. Now that same child, and many others, have their teachers ripped from them. They entered SBAC testing for the first time with a brand new teacher.

Unacceptable. The end of their school year, which should be filled with field trips, field day and celebrating a successful year, was filled with tears and confusion. When is enough enough? When will this City put the children at the center of education? Invest in our children, after all they are the future of this City. I have heard remarks that enrollment is down. Can that possibly be because for the past 20 years or so Shelton schools haven't been fully funded so families would rather move to a neighboring town where taxes may be a bit higher, yes, but the schools have a great reputation and are fully funded. I have also heard why does the Board of Education ask for more money every year. Well my electricity and groceries cost more this month than last month as I am sure yours do too. How is that even a valid argument? I am here tonight on behalf of my children, all the children in Shelton and all the teachers. Shelton schools have the ability to be so great. Every teacher I have encountered has been amazing and truly puts the kids at the center of their work. My best friend teaches Special Education at ESS, I myself am a room parent, year book coordinator and on the PTO. Outside of the school I coach the town cheer team. I was proud to say I lived in Shelton. Now frankly, I am embarrassed. We keep building up our City and families are moving in, yet we don't have teachers to teach them. The 2024-2025 budget needs to be fully funded so history does not repeat itself. If this continues and positions continue to be cut, it will necessitate the hiring of more psychologists and counselors to emotionally support the children. How does that help your bottom line? I love Sunnyside, I love Shelton, but I love my children more. Our schools need to be fully funded so that the travesty that occurred two weeks ago does not happen again. I refuse to lay down quietly while teachers are overworked, under-supported and my 9-year-old daughter cries at night because she misses her teacher. Do better. Thank you.

Alderman Anglace: We will take a 10 minute break.

Reilly Brady

22 Oak Glen Drive, Shelton, CT

I attend Perry Hill School. I would like to tell you how not fully funding the budget has affected the students and staff. This reminds me of a (inaudible). If you don't fully fund the budget and then you have to lay off teachers. Once you do that, the teachers that should not have to go in classrooms have to go in classrooms. Then the students who need support get no support and do bad in their classes. This is a struggle for me because I can't imagine if there are more cuts, we need our teachers, counselors and staff to be successful. Please fully fund the budget. Thank you.

Tracey Sedlock

11 Lisa Drive, Shelton, CT

I am a Shelton resident, a parent of a senior at the high school and a teacher affected by this year's budget. 16 days ago I was told that my position as an instructional interventionist was being eliminated and I was transferred to teach 6th grade beginning May 1st. That position was held by a colleague of mine whose employment was terminated. 14 days ago my son's math teacher was transferred from the high

school to the intermediate school. At the time there were 29 days left of school. The disruption to all of the above is absurd at this time of year. The high school volleyball team and winter percussion were put in positions this year where they had to pay for their own transportation to games, rent space to practice, rent trailers to safe keep instruments and move games due to the closing of school over April break. Just today, the volleyball players learned that they will need to transport themselves to a tournament this weekend due to budget complications. These athletes and performers deserve better. It is unfair that the spring sports and clubs were negatively affected by the lack of funds. These students should not be paying the price for an unbalanced budget. They are talented students who are proud to represent their high school and the budget distractions continue to disrupt their efforts. Teachers in Shelton have long embraced the mantra of doing more with less. It is an unrealistic statement but we do it every single day. The more important concern here is the welfare of our students. These students have built relationships with their teachers only to have them vanish overnight. For some, the connections to these teachers are depended upon daily. The first day I stepped into my 6th grade position, the students were upset and some cried. These children, aged 11 and 12, felt abandoned. Their sense of stability was taken from them. The students I serviced in Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions were also abandoned. As an interventionist my role extended beyond academics. I fostered confidence and established rapport as well as bridging the gaps in their learning in Reading and Math. Now, I pass them in the hallways, they wave and ask where did you go. These students deserve a better education. All of the students of Shelton Public Schools deserve a better education. They deserve an environment built on trust and stability where they can rely on their educators to be their support, their cheerleader and, most importantly, their teacher for every single day of the school year. Please fully fund the education budget. The students of Shelton deserve the best teachers and those teachers are right here in our district. Thank you.

Fred Tagg

68 Wheeler Street, Shelton, CT

Good evening. I have been here for 60 years in Shelton. I would like to thank the Board of Aldermen for their service. I couldn't imagine having their jobs and I know it is not you guys who are totally at fault for anything. I don't fault any of you for the current status because the last time we had a tax increase I think we also celebrated landing on the moon. Also, I think Colonel Sanders was still a Private, so that's how long ago that was. We can't really fault them too much, the closest thing they ever had to an iPad was an Etch-A-Sketch.

All kidding aside, I am a maintenance trade worker for the Shelton Board of Ed and I have been privileged to see the dedication of the teachers and the supporting staff in action. There is not enough time to express the accolades of all involved. There are a lot of unsung heroes among them and God Bless each and every one of you. The old saying, it takes a village to raise a child, well it is time for the village taxpayers to accept a tax increase that is overdue. Raise the taxes. It is not your fault. Blame whoever you want to blame. Blame me, blame the teachers, blame the kids, blame whoever you want, blame

Biden, blame Covid. It is all in there, but it's the responsibility of the town to fully educate our children to the best of our ability. God Bless Shelton, God Bless America. Do the right thing. Help us out here.

Jessica Scandurra

20 Audubon Lane, Shelton, CT

I am an elementary school teacher in a neighboring town, a former Shelton graduate, a daughter of a retired Shelton educator and most importantly the parent of a 5th grader at Perry Hill School. I really am here to urge you to fully support the Superintendent's budget request. I just want to give you a little bit of background about my son's experience here at the Shelton Public Schools. My husband and I were so excited to be able to raise our son in the town where both of our parents live, where I grew up and we wanted him to have those same experiences. He had the most wonderful and amazing teachers, some of whom are sitting back here, including Mrs. Dempsey who spoke before, and he had amazing magical teachers, but he was also in a class of 26 and 27. Now, I'm not sure if you can imagine what 27 first graders would be like in a classroom, but as a former first grade teacher who had classes of maybe 22 at the most, and I know how hard that was to differentiate for all of those students, to meet all those individual needs of the students, but then add on top of that Mrs. Welch teaching virtually and doing distance learning with all of those students. He had to share Chromebooks when they have 1:1 devices. He had Smart Boards that didn't work. He now is currently having teachers, he didn't have library because the librarian was subbing, he didn't have enrichment because she was subbing. He is not getting the education that he deserves.

As an educator I sit at meetings in my own town where I don't have a voice. I made myself a promise that I would stand here where I did have a voice and speak to you about the importance of funding the budget, but as I sit here and listen to person after person urging you to support the budget, year after year after year, it makes me wonder is my voice ever heard, does it even have a value? Malcolm X once said education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. This sentiment is particularly relevant to our current situation as the decisions we make now regarding education funding will directly impact the future of our students and our community. Teachers in our district are already stretched thin. The recent layoffs within our school district have only exacerbated this issue. With fewer teachers, they are being asked to do more and with less. While already wounded, the schools are now facing further cuts if the budget is not funded. Not fully funding the education budget will result in large class sizes, limited resources, less individualized support for our students, teachers will be forced to take on more, but at what cost? This will make it challenging to provide the education our students deserve. Furthermore, the impact of underfunding education is very well documented. Studies have shown that students who do not receive a quality education are more likely to struggle academically, experience behavior problems and ultimately have lower earning potential as adults. By fully funding the Superintendent's budget request, we can ensure that our students have the resources they need to be successful both academically and in their adult lives. Our children are the future of Shelton and they deserve the best. Schools continue to face the monumental task of helping our students recover from the learning loss caused by the disruption of Covid-19. Performance indexes

are still below pre-pandemic scores. Closing this gap will require additional resources and support, including smaller class sizes, tutoring and intervention support, enhanced educational resources – not less support. We will not make those gains without more support. Further cuts to the educational budget will only worsen those challenges. As an elementary school teacher, I have witnessed first-hand the negative impact that budget cuts have had on our student's education and wellbeing. Our students deserve better. They deserve access to a high-quality education that prepares them for successes in the future. By fully funding the Superintendent's budget request we can ensure that our schools have the necessary resources to provide our students with the education they deserve. Thank you.

Nicole Lopes

31 Melon Patch Lane, Monroe, CT

I don't like reading. This is a comment that I have heard so many times as a classroom teacher. Having taught kindergarten, 3rd, 4th and 5th, this is always a line that I constantly listen to from my students. As an educator I would tell parents at parent/teacher conferences that each child needs to find their love for reading. Each child needs to find and figure out what they love to read about. I assured parents that once their child found an interest in a topic or a genre that their child will then have a love for reading. But what about those students that can't find a topic or a genre they love? Not because they aren't willing to, but because they truly can't due to reading issues. There are so many students that want to love reading, but can't do it on their own. As a classroom teacher I noticed there were a lot of children who needed more reading assistance than I could give them in a classroom. I knew within a few years of being a classroom teacher that I wanted to go back to school to further my education in literacy. Going back to school I knew that I wanted my focus to be on remedial reading and remedial language arts. I knew I wanted to help those students with specific reading deficiencies. I knew I wanted to create targeted reading instruction for those students who needed to fill certain gaps. I could see those students wanted to become better readers, but weren't able to do it on their own in the big classroom. They needed small group instruction with a trained reading teacher to help overcome those reading challenges to close the gap or gaps that they had. It took a few years for me to finally graduate with my 102 Certification and my six-year degree in Literacy. I actually had my first child while attending classes and never paused or took a semester off because I knew how important this certification and degree was. I knew I could help struggling readers in the future. That knowledge of knowing that I could help students to love to read is what kept me going. I have been a reading interventionist for almost four years and I have seen so many students go from I don't like reading, to I love reading. That change in comment has made me wake up every morning eager to get to my job. Those small comments that made me realize how important my small group instruction as a reading interventionist. I truly hope that this position is in every Shelton school at the start of the next school year. As they say, small steps can lead to big changes, one reading teacher can make a big difference as well.

Ava Johnson

44 Fox Hunt Road, Shelton, CT

Good evening members of the Board of Aldermen. My name is Ava Johnson and I am a proud 4th grader at Elizabeth Shelton School as well as a dedicated resident of Shelton. I want to express my gratitude to my teacher, Mr. Ebert, especially during teacher appreciate week. Mr. Ebert's dedication, knowledge and engaging teaching style has had a profound impact on me and my peers, preparing us exceptionally well for Perry Hill. To all educators present, I extend my sincerest wishes for a belated Happy Teacher Appreciation Week. It is disheartening that once again we find ourselves fighting for our school budget to pass. To those who are not educators, it may be difficult to fully grasp the concept and complexities of modern education. While the students are indeed bright and capable, we also have diverse needs to enable our teachers and administrators to perform their duties effectively. They need to be equipped with the necessary resources and reasonable class sizes. Imagine the challenge of teaching a classroom of 30 4th graders all day. It is simply not equitable for our educators or us students. Research demonstrates that larger class sizes hinder the teacher's ability to maintain order, provide individual attention and ultimately impacts student learning negatively. Surely this isn't the reason for education that our community expects. I noticed the growth and new businesses and stores and development in Shelton which undoubtedly brings economic prosperity to our town. I urge you to consider to invest the tax revenue in the future to the children of Shelton who will become business owners, fire fighters, doctors, teachers, and so much more. As a student committed to maximize my education journey, I implore you to make the right decision for Shelton. I do believe in our community, please support my teachers in the Shelton Public Schools. Thank you for your attention.

Jeanine Meeker

59 Rocky Rest Road, Shelton, CT

Good evening. I have been a resident since 2003. My daughter started her school career at Long Hill. They also pledge of allegiance at every school as we did this evening at the beginning of this meeting. You also have pledged, by taking the seats that you hold as Aldermen, to do what is right by the citizens of this City. That means all citizens, regardless of age, ability, where they live. You have to do your civic duty to fully fund the Board of Education and not defund it, which you actually have been doing. It is not underfunding, you have been defunding the Board of Education consistently, religiously and criminally. I'm going to point that out. Do any of you know what an IEP actually is? Do any of you know what actually goes into a SPED program? Probably not. Have you ever spent a day as a Junior Achievement teacher? I did in the elementary school. It was sheer hell. It gave me a genuine appreciation for every educator regardless of their skill and how long they have been in the system. It is not something that is easy to do, let alone teach 5 children. Bump that to 25 with an attention span of a freaking gnat. Forget it. None of you would last an hour. Yet, these people continuously sacrifice their personal time, their personal money, their personal mental health to provide for the children of this City. Now, you may sit there and think oh, \$78 million that's fine, that's perfectly adequate for the City of Shelton's 42,000 people. Well here, I grew up in a town in Massachusetts, same number of people, it is a town. They fund their education budget at \$86.8 million. They have 5800 students. How many students are in the Shelton School System? Do any of you even know? No, you probably don't and that is part of the problem. You are not the experts in your field when it comes to education. Mr. Saranich

is. He and his Board of Education members have also sat down and told you what they need to make their budget feasible, to deal with every health insurance increase, every pension increase and also provide the daily needs of their students. Listen to them, don't pull an ego trip. This is not your expertise. This is not where you rise and do great things. The greatest thing you can do is fully fund the Board of Education. Please do your civic duty. Do not make me come up here for an 11th year in a row. I am tired of it, literally tired. Mr. Anglace, are you tired of hearing parents year after year tell you the same speeches? I can guarantee you can look through your minutes over the last ten years and it is pretty much the same song coming from this microphone. Stop the song, end the dance. Just fund the Board of Education. Thank you.

Alexis Weinstein

24 Beech Tree Hill Road, Shelton, CT

I am here today to speak to you to express my profound disappointment regarding the chronic underfunding of education in this town. My daughter is a student at ESS and I want to say that I have never met such a talented, dedicated, caring group of educators. They amaze me every day. They have done a wonderful job and I am truly, truly grateful for them. But, because of the chronic and short-sighted budget cuts, they are having to do more with less, more with fewer resources, increased classroom size, lack of support staff and much more. I feel, and I think a lot of people feel, that we are relying too heavily on the dedication and teachers who are going in for all the right reasons to bridge the gap for these resources. We can no longer rely on them to continue to give of themselves and their time and money when we are continuing to take away resources that make their working situation untenable. I wouldn't work in that situation, if my boss were to continue to do that to me as an employee, I wouldn't stay no matter how talented or appreciated I was. If you can't continue to supply employees with what they need, those dedicated people are going to leave and our town will be in an even worse situation regarding education. I think that we are setting our children up to fail by not supporting them and not supporting our teachers. I urge you to consider your priorities and allocate the adequate resources, or preferably more than adequate, but we will take even just funding the Board of Education budget. I think more is needed but if we can just find a place to meet and fund the Board of Education budget then we can ensure that the children in this town receive the support and opportunities they deserve. Investing in education is a fundamental necessity for the whole town, not just the families with children, but everyone benefits from a fully funded educational system, even those without children. I know that we can do it as we are a town of people who really care and really believe and I think that we can make this happen. Thank you.

Thomas Harbinson

15 Soundcrest Drive, Shelton, CT

I know we are supposed to address the Board, but if you would indulge me for a moment to Reilly, Ava and Jake, your public speaking was impressive.

Now for something completely different, to quote some comedians. The Public Notice of this Public Hearing stated that the budget could be found on the City website and I am referencing those documents as I pulled them on Friday, May 10th. On the Revenue side of the budget, Account 381.44-00 Sale of City Assets has an amount of \$3 million. There is no further depth or reference as to what City Assets would compile to that substantial level. Is it the sale of City property for developments on Canal Street? Is it the sale of parcels of land along Constitution Boulevard, North, which is still under construction? Or maybe you are going to throw in the towel near the end of the fiscal year and sell all the school buses? Joking aside, I have to wonder if it is the Constitution Boulevard parcels. The progress of the development conducting basic site preparation and road work has been abysmally slow in comparison to various private enterprise all around Shelton, moving projects into completion and contributing to our grand list. We see them all featured prominently in our *Shelton Life* promotional literature. There has been no progress report for Constitution Boulevard that I have seen. In driving by every day on my way to work, a dramatic period of time has passed with little to no activity on the site that I can see. I don't understand why anyone thinks that government can do a better job there than private enterprise. Don't they recall Ronald Reagan's quote, "I'm from the government and I am here to help." No matter the politics or choices made, the Board of Aldermen should be requesting a progress report of when the road will be finished and when the parcels will be available for sale to start contributing to our Grand List. Returning to my focus, the Board of Aldermen need to ask if that \$3 million number for a sale of City property is realistic. I would like to see more detail rather than a substantial, yet nebulously recent amount.

I see that we are renting a number of residential homes at what I believe are below market rates. 58 Perry Hill Road for \$19,800; 56 Perry Hill Road for \$18,000; 279 Soundview Avenue for \$19,200; 29 Old Town Road for \$19,200; again \$19,200 for 48 Grove Street; and 38 Black Hill Road for \$19,800. These are around \$1600 per month. I would recommend that if you are to continue such low rent levels for the marketplace that you at least put a deed restriction upon them so that they can be legally recognized as affordable housing and contribute towards the ratios needed to avoid certain developers holding the City hostage with dense development applications under 8-30g regulations. You had this on your agenda recently under the recommendations from the P&Z department and the mayor encouraged you to table it, which you did. It has not been taken up again on an agenda that I have seen, but I would encourage you to do so with independent thoughtfulness.

Community development is budgeted at \$92,550, last year was budgeted just \$200 less and not a penny has been spent on that line item, because Charlene DeFilippo who was in that role has been retired for some time and not replaced. There are a lot of community grants that were obtained and administered by her and having attended the Shelton Economic Development Corporation quarterly meeting this morning, where I serve as the director, the SEDC has taken on many other grant writing opportunities that were previously done under this line item. So it seems senseless to budget for an office that the administration hasn't refilled for so long.

Engineering – several line items related to storm water testing, management and MS4 outfall have had zero expenditures and yet a substantially similar amount of budgeted for this next cycle. The amount of silt accumulating in our streams and water courses due to lack of maintenance of our street storm drains and catch basins is abominable. There are State of Connecticut standards and reports that need to be maintained when it comes to MS4, which stands for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems. These inspection standards are not being done by the engineering department with a regularity that they should be. Perhaps that would be if the City Engineer were actually licensed in the State of Connecticut and perform as an engineer and be aware of new laws and regulations that apply to the City's storm water system. Regular review of the system might perhaps identify where I&I is occurring (Inflow and Infiltrations). They are currently in the sanitary sewer system which should be separate from the storm water system. Yet, according to the WPCA meetings, the I&I issues are causing the sewer treatment plant to exceed its capacity during heavy rainfalls.

I have separately and publicly suggested to the Board of Aldermen that they research the potential of ensuring that all motor vehicles within Shelton are registered to the municipality, using the example of Danbury's success on that investigative research and thus not continue to see two local developers that I have identified register their vehicles in Florida and avoid paying property taxes to Shelton.

In closing, I am a lifelong resident, one of those "older" taxpayers referenced to. Some might think are little impacted by the education of children in the community. But you would be wrong. At my workplace I often work with the young who are products of the school system and need to know the difference between a shovel and a spade. That is a true life example that I have had to explain. I am one of the many who cares for this City as a whole as you do and I hope that you will make the challenging decisions ahead in the right direction. Thank you.

Magda Wysocki

51 Woods Grove Road, Shelton, CT

Good evening. I am a parent of two kids who got to Booth Hill. They came to me a few weeks ago with tears in their eyes asking what is going on, what is happening, mom are we in danger, is something going on? How do I as a parent explain to them things that are very complicated for adults to grasp. Why are they asking for money that is needed for the education of our youth and are not receiving it over and over and over and over and over again. If you can imagine, you guys sitting here – about 9 people together, and it was about 250 people that came in as I kind of counted around, it is about 30 something people per one person to you. How hard was it for you to say don't clap, don't raise your voice, don't scream. Now imagine a class of kids sitting of 30, more than 25 or 27 or 28, how hard it is for a teacher to stretch her or his limit trying to teach these kids. It is unbelievably hurtful to see the young adults that we have and the young kids that we try to teach as parents at home where we try to do our job the best and then send our kids to school where they are there for 8-9 hours a day with the teachers, with someone who they connect and then those teachers are being let go at the end of the semester. That is just unacceptable. I can tell you one thing, a person that dies you cannot bring back to life and change

that. But anything else in life you can change, you can work, you can make it happen if you really, really want to make it happen – whether it is raising the taxes, whether it is coming up with a solution, but something needs to change. Please hear us and give us the budget that we need and have asked for over and over again. Thank you.

Emelia Moe

23 Shagbark Road, Shelton, CT

Good afternoon. I am here with you today because I am tired. I am tired of seeing kids in the hall with new teachers and I have one word for that. Change. We need a change for everything. We need change with the monies, we need change with everything really. I am tired of seeing kids crying because they miss their old teachers, they want their old teachers back. You are just giving a little amount, they need a lot. We need a lot of change here. Thank you.

Abby Jones

10 Booth Hill Road, Shelton, CT

I am a 7th grade student here at SIS. It makes me feel so upset that I see my old teachers talking here. Almost every day I want into class, my friends and I need to go into other classrooms to get more chairs and desks. It is bad that classes are so huge that we need to borrow basic things like desks and chairs that we should have extras of, not borrow them. When my class needs a substitute teacher, most of the subs that we have are teachers that are taking time out of their free periods to help other children with their education. Being the daughter of a mother who worked in childcare, I know what it is like to have my mother come home every day being so tired they don't have other teachers to help. Two of my teachers who I loved having and being in class with them got laid off and had to start teaching other grades and classes. Not only that, I can tell you how many times I needed a new Chromebook because mine wouldn't work. I remember I used to be happy going to school every day and seeing my teachers faces who I have grown to love and wish I could have again. Now I go into school wondering if all my teachers are still at my classrooms and say good morning to us. SIS used to be offered three languages, however they had to get rid of two because there are not enough teachers. This does not just affect the teachers, it also affects students. Think of the students, do better. Thank you.

Anthony Stellato

7 Lagana Lane, Shelton, CT

I have lived here for about two years. I have been affected by the budget and the cuts. My own teacher has been laid off and when she explained what was happening, many of my classmates were devastated. She is only one of them. Many teachers have been let go and not just the homeroom classes have been affected. Also 5th grade enrichment has been affected because their teacher isn't required to teach that and those kids could not receive the education that they need because they are at a higher level because that teacher needs to substitute. Many other students who go to other classes, including me, can't do

that because our teacher is not there and they have to sub out. Many of them were put into different positions and I hope that this problem does not have to affect future students. Thank you.

David Spinetti

26 Saranor Drive, Shelton, CT

A lot of people have spoken and your rules at the beginning were speak to next year's budget, speak to you and address you. One of the things that was a little bit lacking in what others have said was just the question. How do we not go through this again next year? If we don't fully fund the budget, we are already asking for that to happen just at the start of the year. We will just ax 10% and we will be fine hopefully, maybe. But in order to not have this happen again, in order to not have teachers leave mid-year due to unexpected things, in order to not lose teachers a mere 30 days before the end of the year. Fully fund the education budget, please. Thank you.

Letters Emailed to Board of Aldermen Clerk:

Angela Vigent

85 Grassland Rd, Milford

Please support our Shelton students, teachers, and schools by approving a budget that shows your commitment to education.

Adequately funding our schools shows that this town is willing to put resources toward supporting our students. It continues vital services and staffing levels that attract parents to select our Shelton schools and ensures that we will not have to deal with shortfalls at the end of the year. We cannot afford another short-term budget.

Shelton families choose our public schools because of the excellent quality of educational services, programs, and teaching. Please stand up for our students, educators, and schools by maintaining this level of excellence and supporting a responsible budget that invests in our kids.

It is absolute disservice to public educators and other staff to be left to pick up the pieces left by our colleague's absence. It is also a huge disservice to our students who are not receiving the same caliber of educational excellence they once were. EVERYTHING has increased over the last five years. Have you checked your electric bill lately? Stop asking us to make do with less yet turn out higher test scores. Fund the budget now.

Tina Landi

63 Pine Tree Hill Rd.

Please support our Shelton students, teachers, and schools by approving a budget that shows your commitment to education.

Adequately funding our schools shows that this town is willing to put resources toward supporting our students. It continues vital services and staffing levels that attract parents to select our Shelton schools and ensures that we will not have to deal with shortfalls at the end of the year. We cannot afford another short-term budget.

Shelton families choose our public schools because of the excellent quality of educational services, programs, and teaching. Please stand up for our students, educators, and schools by maintaining this level of excellence and supporting a responsible budget that invests in our kids.

Stephen Farnum
31 Rodia Ridge Rd

Please demonstrate to the parents and voters of Shelton that you have the best interests of our community in mind by voting to adequately fund our schools.

It is unconscionable that teachers were let go in the middle of the school year because of inadequate funding. Our town's ongoing inability to appropriately fund education has the following negative impacts:

1. Inability to attract highly-qualified teachers. Who would want to join a district that might lay them off a few months later?
2. Declining property values. As an aging population moves out of their single-family homes in Shelton, who will buy them? Families with young children will look elsewhere due to our reputation as a district that does not value education.
3. Lower test scores and academic achievement, which will contribute to #2 in addition to failing our moral obligation to educate Shelton's young people.

Education is a priority for me when I am in the voting booth. I hope you will show myself and other community-minded voters that you stand with us and the students of Shelton.

Lisa MacKniak
120 Wooster St

Please support our Shelton students, teachers, and schools by approving a budget that shows your

commitment to education.

Adequately funding our schools shows that this town is willing to put resources toward supporting our students. It continues vital services and staffing levels that attract parents to select our Shelton schools and ensures that we will not have to deal with shortfalls at the end of the year. We cannot afford another short-term budget.

Our students need support staff and their dedicated teachers to learn. There is so much going on in our world for our students and they deserve to have the level of excellence that SPS has always given. Our children should not have to suffer due to the actions of the adults in our community.

Shelton families choose our public schools because of the excellent quality of educational services, programs, and teaching. Please stand up for our students, educators, and schools by maintaining this level of excellence and supporting a responsible budget that invests in our kids.

Jessica Haight Scandurra
Shelton

Dear Members of the Board of Aldermen,

I hope this email finds you well. As an elementary school teacher from a neighboring town, a former SPS student, the daughter of a retired Shelton educator, and the parent of a fifth grader at Perry Hill School, I am writing to urge you to support fully funding the Superintendent's budget request.

Malcolm X once said, "Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." This sentiment is particularly relevant to our current situation, as the decisions we make now regarding education funding will directly impact the future of our students and our community.

Teachers in our district are already stretched thin, the recent layoffs within our school district have only exacerbated this issue. With fewer teachers, they are being asked to do more with less. While already wounded, the schools are now facing further cuts if the budget is not funded. Not fully funding the education budget will result in: larger class sizes, limited resources, less individualized support for our students. Teachers will be forced to take on more, but at what cost? This will make it challenging to provide the education our children deserve.

Furthermore, the impact of underfunded education is well-documented. Studies have shown that students who do not receive a quality education are more likely to struggle academically, experience behavioral problems, and ultimately have lower earning potential as adults. By fully funding the

Superintendent's budget request, we can ensure that our students have the resources they need to succeed academically and in life. Our children are the future of Shelton and they deserve the best!

Schools continue to face the monumental task of helping our students recover from the learning loss caused by the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. SBAC performance indexes are still below pre pandemic scores. Closing this gap will require additional resources and support, including smaller class sizes, tutoring programs, and enhanced educational resources not less!

Further cuts to the educational budget will only worsen these challenges. As an elementary school teacher, I have witnessed firsthand the negative impact that budget cuts have had on our students' education and well-being.

Our students deserve better. They deserve access to a high-quality education that prepares them for success in the future. By fully funding the Superintendent's budget request, we can ensure that our schools have the necessary resources to provide our students with the education they deserve. Investing in education is investing in the future of our community. I urge you to prioritize funding for our schools and support the Superintendent's budget request.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Alderman Anglace: I want to thank you all for coming, for your perseverance and staying until the very end. Your viewpoints will all be in the minutes of the meeting which will be online and you can review what was said tonight as we will do. Thank you again for another enlightening public hearing on the budget. Thank you very much for coming out and we will see you next year.

ADJOURNMENT:

Alderman McPherson MOVED to adjourn; Alderman Balamaci seconded. A voice vote was taken and motion passed unanimously (7-0). The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Donna Fonda

Donna Fonda
Acting Clerk, Board of Aldermen

DATE APPROVED _____ BY: _____
Mayor Mark A. Lauretti