Resident: Roy Duncan

Question/Comment:

Questions 1 through 6 were answered by the BOE

1a. How does the BOE and Superintendent explain a $21,510 per pupil expenditure in 2018-19 when, for example, W. Hartford spent $17,001 and Avon spent $17,516. We are way ahead of other area towns in expenses and are generally below them in achievement levels.

The needs of our students and families is what dictates the level of resources required to meet the educational mandate of our public school system. It is important to note the difference in population between W. Hartford, Avon and Bloomfield.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Students per subgroup* as Documented on 2017-2018 State Report on District Profiles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Hartford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloomfield</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* CT Department of Education defines subgroups in the three categories listed.

It is also important to note that the percent of the total town budget allocated to public education also differs from town to town. Bloomfield has the distinction of being the town with the lowest percent allocation of the total town budget towards public education when compared to the surrounding towns.

Percent of Board of Education to Town Budget**
1b. What will the per pupil expenditure be under the proposed budget?

The actual Per Pupil expenditure (Net Current Expenditure per Pupil - NCEP) is a number the CT Department of Education calculates based on a statutory formula using end-of-year expenses and revenue reported by the district in September after the close of the previous fiscal year. The state calculates our NCEP and then reports out to each district. This calculation takes into account other funding sources beyond local or town funding. It also takes into account state contributions and grants and other cost reimbursement calculations. Bearing in mind that Bloomfield does an excellent job of accessing all available grant and state resources to offset the cost of education, the NCEP for the 2020/2021 fiscal year would be based on assumptions on of state grant funding and reimbursements, which are not available until after the district submits its end-of-year report by September 1 and the audit is completed on that report by December 31.

2. What is (or are) the prime driver(s) behind our high per pupil expenditure?

As demonstrated in the answer to the first question, the drivers that dictate per pupil expenditures are the added resources needed to address the needs of our individual student body. These drivers include:

a. special education costs, particularly growing out-of-district placement costs;
b. resources needed to support extended learning opportunities like after school, summer and weekend learning;
c. Expanding resources for the growing English Learner (EL) population that has grown from 2.6% in 2017-2018 to 4.3% in 2019-2020. The EL population is one of the fastest growing populations in the district.

Growing costs in health benefits and contributions to Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) as mandated by contracts or federal regulatio
3. **Please show the number of pupils in the system for the past 3 years and the number forecast for the next 2 years.**

While other districts and the state has been posting decreasing enrollment over the past few years, Bloomfield Public Schools has seen increasing enrollment. This trend makes forecasting beyond the next year very difficult as all indicators point to overall decreasing statewide enrollments. Therefore, the district can only provide one year of forecasting rather than two.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Enrollment</td>
<td>2,135</td>
<td>2,172</td>
<td>2,193</td>
<td>2,262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4a. **What portion of our school budget is paid for by the state of CT?**

The 2019-2020 school year district budget was made up of 26% of state funds, which includes Educational Cost Sharing (ECS), magnet school grants, other state grants and non-public health services allocations.

4b. **How does that compare with W. Hartford, Avon and Hartford?**

The level of detail included in Bloomfield’s budget book is not available from other towns. However, based on data from the most recent District Profile and Performance Report provided by the State, below are the expenditures by State revenue source for FY 2016-17:

- W. Hartford: 16.2%
- Avon: 5.8%
- Hartford: 70.0%

5a. **The state imposes many education mandates on the towns. The state also has laws that stipulate their level of reimbursement for those mandates. Does the state comply with its own laws?**

The State does abide by its laws. Of course, if funding is limited at the state level, the legislature will amend the existing statutory funding formula to lower the state’s grant contribution to a town.

5b. **How much should the state pay toward this year’s expenses?**

While this year’s calculations are up in the air as the state decides how to proceed with the types of services and payments for Out-of-district placements, the comparison of the optimal reimbursement formula to the current practice shows the magnitude of the special education funding dilemma.
For example, if the Special Education Excess Cost Grant was fully funded as originally enacted, the state would reimburse the district for out-of-district placement students using a formula that looks like:

\[
\text{Cost of Out-of-district placement} - \text{District’s State Calculated per Pupil Expense} = 100\% \text{ of Reimbursement Amount.}
\]

However, the State is not funding the Grant at 100% but rather at a 70% reimbursement rate.

5c. **If it met its own obligations, how much would the state pay Bloomfield this year and next year?**

Again, under the current circumstances, this number is impossible to calculate until the state makes a decision on how the districts will be mandated to move forward with the out-of-district vendors and the level of support that students will receive for the remainder of the school year.

6a. **How many DCF and court placements do we have in our student body?**

Based on current enrollment data for the 2019-2020 school year:

- DCF – 43 students

6b. **How does that compare with surrounding towns in raw numbers and percentages?**

We do not have this type of detailed student enrollment data for other towns.

6c. **How many of those placements require special education.**

Listed as Special Ed – 23 students

6d. **How many qualify for out-of-district placement?**

Outplaced DCF students – 8 students

6e. **What is the cost of out-of-district placements?**

Out-of-district placements average between $85,000 to $100,000 per year. It is important to note that DCF Out-Of-District Placements have a 76.6% reimbursement rate, while district out-of-district placed students have a 19.2% reimbursement rate.

7. **Does everyone understand that once the education budget is increased, it can't go down again per state mandates?** Any exceptions are rare and hard-fought. So, once a big increase is approved, it is "baked in" for all the years that follow. That makes little sense to me, but that's the law. Please consider the long-term impact of any large increase as you deliberate'
Resident: Christopher Loftus

Question/Comment:

As I read, the grand list has increased 10% mainly on reassessed values. That is great for the town, but as a home owner it is not all that great. That would mean that mostly every property owner in town is paying more. Although this is a reality of owning a home, on top of paying more this year because of a higher value, the town now thinks it is not enough and wants to increase our mill rate and our taxes. The council must think of the hard working residents in town. I am all for improved services, but as our grand list grows, we should look at ways to provide property tax relief or at least hold taxes flat. We always hear from politicians that we need new building in town to keep taxes down, but as I see new buildings, and as our budget shows a substantial increase in permitting, that appears to not be the case. Why should we not be against any new building then if our taxes are going to keep going up anyways?

As a young resident and homeowner in this town, I will be honest with this council...Bloomfield is no place any young person is telling me they would like to settle. I often hear from young friends that “Bloomfield is overpriced” and the consensus is that young people only want to stay here until they have a family, and then settle in many of the surrounding towns with better schools, better roads and better value. I realize this budget includes much more money for capital improvements like roads which I agree with, but I would like to see these improvements without putting any more burden on the taxpayers of this town.

I hope you will reevaluate the proposed budget and come back with one that does not burden taxpayers in this town.

1. One question I do have is what are some of the long range things we are trying to plan for? Answered live at budget meeting on 4/23/2020

Resident: Christopher Shepard

Question/Comment:

1. Well my first question is where is the budget? Good idea of doing this. My feedback is that the budget was very difficult to find on the website. I clicked the "budget" link near the top of the homepage, but the top search results were not helpful. I narrowed the search parameters to recent dates in order to find: https://www.bloomfieldct.gov/sites/bloomfieldct/files/uploads/town-manager-proposed-fy-2021-budget_pub.pdf. To be truly transparent this could have been provided in the email message below and be prominently featured on the front of the homepage itself.
Both the Town Manager Proposed and Revised budget can be found online under the Town Council or Finance department page. In addition, when Civic Plus sent out the notification asking residents to email questions on the budget to budget2021, there was a hyperlink that would take you directly to the proposed budget. It is also available in a hard copy abbreviated version in the Town Manager’s office. The Library and Town Clerk always receive a hard copy that is available for review.

Resident: Lois and David Hager

Question/Comment:

1. Thanks for the opportunity to ask questions. Does the capital budget include a line item to fund or begin to fund a new library building?

   Answers by Councilor Gough- Yes, see near the end of the Capital Improvement section - attached. Note $50 K is in the current year’s budget, which is what you may mean by "begin" i.e. engage an architect and get plans accurate enough for the bonding Referendum.

Resident: Joseph Swetcky

Question/Comment:

After reviewing the Town Manager's FY2021 Proposed Budget and its required 4.33% tax increase I would urge the Town Council to direct the Town Manager to resubmit a proposed budget that is more realistic with the current economic situation we are all facing.

I understand that the proposed budget is a "starting point" and was proposed to generate discussion on the Town’s needs, but at this time the needs of the citizens of Bloomfield are for responsible fiscal management. Many people in town are out of work, had their hours reduced or soon will be. Asking them to pay an additional 4.33% in taxes in addition to the impact of revaluation is unrealistic in light of what we are all financially facing.

Please remove from the proposed budget those "nice to have" items such as additional staffing in the public works and library departments. Also, the idea of creating a middle management cadre is a frill during times like we are experiencing. Please focus on providing the residents of Bloomfield with those services which are truly essential and not an unnecessary want.

It is understandable that a tax increase will be required in light of all of the outside costs that the Town must pay and has little control over, however a tax increase in the range of no more than 2.5% is more realistic and financial feasible to town tax payers.

The Town Council requested that the Town Manager revised the proposed budget and as a result, all “nice to have” items like additional full time staff has been removed.

Resident: Joan Twiggs

Question/Comment:
Dear Mayor,

As requested (via your general call out to residents), I have reviewed the proposed Town Budget. I have comments and concerns, BOE questions, and suggestions as follows. As a relatively new town resident, this is the first Bloomfield budget that I have reviewed. Thus I am not in a position to compare and contrast this format and analytic approach - representing the first budget shepherded by the new Town Manager - with any prior budgets.

Comment- I like the Department by Department Summary of Accomplishments and Future Goals. This conveys the concrete work being undertaken and future concrete plans.

Thank you😊

Appreciated the report about minority hiring and Bloomfield hiring. I am glad there was strong (75%) minority hiring and 62% Bloomfield resident hiring.

1. **I would like to see a personnel summary by race and gender and job class in order to understand the distribution of minority, women and Bloomfield residents in management/supervisory level positions.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Resident</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessor</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Director of Leisure Services</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Analyst II</td>
<td>Bloomfield</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Director of Public Works</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant to Town Manager</td>
<td>Bloomfield</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Official</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Finance Director</td>
<td>Bloomfield</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of IT</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Leisure Services</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Planning &amp; Zoning</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Senior Center</td>
<td>Bloomfield</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Social Services</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Operations Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance Director</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fleet Services Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Director</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library Director</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
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<td>Lieutenant</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
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</table>
2. **By the way, can the Town influence or at least raise questions about the Stop and Shop managerial profile in that regard.** I refer to the Bloomfield S&S. The managers’ pictures are posted and they are overwhelmingly and perhaps completely white. I would like to see more POC as managerial positions in S&S.

Answered by Jose Giner (Planning Director) - There is not much the Town can do to influence a private company regarding their hiring practices. The only time we have been able to extract any promises regarding the hiring of local or minority contractors or employees has been when we negotiated a tax abatement for new construction. The Town Center apartments has such an agreement in place. Heirloom Flats had to report on a monthly basis to the Council during their construction. The agreement will also apply to Phase II and III of the project.

3. Excellent to know that Bloomfield Public Works Department is the only nationally accredited PW department in the state of Connecticut. I would like to know more about what this means and why it is that we are the only such accredited Department. It would also be helpful to know about accreditation of other Departments (or not).

Answered by the Town’s Interim Public Works Director - Similar to organizations such as Police Departments and School systems, it is a process where the departments practices, values, professionalism and performance are evaluated resulting in an acknowledgement that the department is functioning as a professional organization implementing modern practices and procedures. Bloomfield is the only accredited department in the state which identifies it as a leader in the Public Works profession in the State of Connecticut.

- create impetus for organization self improvement and stimulate general raising of standards
- offer a voluntary evaluation and education program rather than government regulated activity
Since the budget was completed, the state and country have been plunged into a public health and economic crisis. This leads to several questions and concerns:

4. **What is the Town doing/thinking about changes to the budget given the economic impact that this pandemic is causing?** There are references in the budget to the 2008 recession and its impact. **This impact is likely to be more significant.**

   The Town Council has requested that the Town Manager provide a revised proposed budget that will be presented on April 23rd. From there, the Council will start to examine the contents and make changes necessary to provide residents with the most responsible, least impactful budget possible.

5. **What $$ are likely to be distributed to Bloomfield as part of the federal aid package(s)?**

   It is too early to know what the Town will receive in funding from the Federal government. The Town is tracking all the COVID-19 expenditures so that they are properly identified and we will have adequate recordkeeping to request funding when the time comes. To date, the Town has spent just over $30K.

6. **What form of tax relief will Bloomfield provide to residents – I was concerned about the increase in Mill Rate before the crisis, now I am more concerned.**

   The Town Manager and Town Council are working diligently to make sure that the 2021 budget reflects the tough times that the residents in Bloomfield are experiencing. The Town has adopted both tax relief programs that are the State has allowed to help residents navigate these challenging times. There was a postcard mailer that was sent out this week so please look for that and visit the Town of Bloomfield’s website at [www.bloomfieldct.gov/tax-collector](http://www.bloomfieldct.gov/tax-collector) for more information on these programs.

7. **How does the Town collaborate with other municipalities and the State to share resources, especially during this time of increased concern and need.**

   The Town is always looking for ways to work with our surrounding towns to help utilize resources. During this time, departments are in constant contact with towns to share information and ideas on all things COVID-19. Things are happening so fast, and changing so quickly, that it helps to have a support system that extends beyond the staff in Bloomfield. We will continue to explore ways to collaborate with towns in the future.

Board of Education

8. **I would like to see analysis of the Bloomfield School District budget in relation to other CT towns similarly situated. I am open to other forms of comparison. Are you able to suggest any such assessments?**

   Suggestions and Tips

   Answered by BOE: There is no website that analyzes upcoming budget comparisons. There is some comparative data about past expenditures in the District Profile and Performance Report on the CT Department of Education website. The latest report is for school year 2017-18 which includes expenditure data for FY 2016-2017.
9. Add internal hyperlinks to the document so that the reader can easily navigate to sections.  
   This is a great suggestion and one we will try to implement for the Town Council Adopted Budget.

10. Graphs are not universally consistent with data visualization best practices. For example the use of 3-D bar graphs and pie charts is discouraged. I recommend looking into the work of Edward Tufte, a founder of this field associated with Yale University for guidance. There are now many other resources in addition to Tufte. Perhaps relevant personnel could add data visualization to their training plans.
   Another great suggestion and one that the Finance Director has noted for next year’s plan. There were a lot of changes this year to the format and detail, and there will continue to be more in hopes of achieving the Government Finance Officers Association Budget Award.

Additional comment/question receive yesterday (4/23/2020) from Joan Twiggs:

Thanks, I've now looked at the revised budget. I'm concerned it includes a mill rate increase and that the school budget continues to have a 9.78% increase. There seems to be no narrative about this other than removing capital improvement $$. 

11. I find the lack of narrative in itself to be unacceptable. I can’t believe the BOE was unable to find cost savings at this time. Since they are continuing to include classroom based hires, where can reduction of administration/management be found? What is the salary increment portion of the increase? I was in CT state government service during the period following the 2008 recession and personally experienced freeze of pay and furlough. I'm expecting give back from BOE.
   This question was received last night (4/22) and has been sent to the BOE so they can provide answers to the applicable questions.
   With regard to the narrative, hopefully today’s meeting will provide more detail on the changes to the revised budget. There will be a more detailed narrative in the Town Council’s version of the budget.

Resident: Mark Saunders

Question/Comment: Received 4/23/2020 Passed these questions on to Chief Operations Officer and BOE Director of Accounting

1. is there any reason why Carmen Arace Intermediate and Carmen Arace Middle schools remain two entities?

2. Where do I find the line item for Stan Simpson's salary for services as Director of Strategic Communications and Planning? How much do we pay him?

3. Are there any plans for reducing the expenditure-per-student average? Why is it the highest in the region?
1. **Under "fixed charges" on page 15 there is a $5 million decrease. What explain this decrease?**

   This decrease is due to the reallocation of benefits to the department. On page 16 it shows you the increase of $239,676 when you allocate the benefit costs back into the fixed charges.

2. **Does the dollar and percentage change column on Pg. 15 represent the cost of benefits and utilities, which was not included in prior years' budget?**

   Yes, on page 15 the benefits and utilities are included in the departmental budgets. This was a change implemented for the FY 2021 budget. They are allocated to departments so that there is a true cost associated with each department.

3. **What is included under the line item "capital improvement" on Pg. 15.**

   The revised CIP list was unintentionally omitted from the Revised Town Manager budget. It has since been added and reposted on the website. Below is a list of Town funded CIP projects per the Revised budget:

   - Wadhams Road Outlet Stabilization $25K
   - Juniper Lane $16,327
   - Water Splashpad $125K
   - BPD Admin Fleet Vehicle $36K
   - DPW Heavy Equipment $275K
   - Town Hall Mechanical Room Floor $350K
   - Town Hall Chiller Replacement $210K

4. **Why are expenses for the Stem Program and School Readiness Program on pg. 39 included in the Town's budget, as opposed to the Board of Education budget?**

   The School Readiness is a $25K subsidy that the Town contributes to the program and it goes to various accredited daycares in Bloomfield. This program supports 3 slots for Bloomfield residents in this program for the full year and also funds supplies, professional development for staff, and small improvements for home daycare centers. The BOE currently does not receive any school readiness funding from the State.