

Roxanne Maher

From: Steve Masalin
Sent: Wednesday, June 4, 2025 11:38 AM
To: Naomi Rodriguez; April Brunelle; Carmen Garcia Irizarry; Gary St. Vil; Jessica Buhle; Kevin J. Dombrowski; Timothy Ryan; Tony Saccone; William Barnes
Cc: Fred Allyn, III; Roxanne Maher
Subject: FY26 Budget

Dear Town Councilors,

As a longstanding employee (31+ years) I have obviously been involved in many budgets. There have been times when the process has been very difficult; this just happens to be one of those times. However, I have observed some things this time that have been very troubling to me.

It is unfortunate that the process seems to have devolved into a pitting of the Government side against the BOE side, but I think that reflects both the way Ledyard's approach is set up and the ongoing imbalance in budget accountability that results. And though some of this is always manifest in questionable shaping and advancement of talking points versus truisms, I have observed it to a greater degree in discussions surrounding this budget.

I will not speak to all of the ways in which I've seen this, but I will mention a couple.

First, the notion that spending more on education absolutely guarantees a better result is only spin. This argument does not hold up against a fuller context of information. To this point I will mention my personal situation. My wife and I chose to homeschool all of our children all the way through High School.

What were the results? Our eldest son ended up being selected to the US Coast Guard Academy as one of 300 applicants out of 6,000 candidates. His SAT scores exceeded mine. Our eldest daughter selected a trade that suited her, and in which she is still excelling. Our youngest daughter graduated summa cum laude with an AS in Early Childhood Education. Our youngest son at 15, was also well on his way to an outstanding High School performance when the Lord chose to take him home.

Aside from the sweat equity we devoted to this, the annual cost of curriculum (much of it used and subsequently handed down), supplies, on-line resources and courses, etc. was a mere fraction of what is represented as the annual per student expense for a Ledyard Public school education. And we were able to tailor our children's education to their individual bents. Thus, performance cannot be absolutely tied to simply spending more money. If anything, it's how that money is spent.

Second, the notion that value is absolutely connected to (on-paper) credentials is almost insulting. Though I have a BS degree in Engineering from the US Naval Academy and a Professional Engineer's license, each of which represent high levels of achievement and perhaps aptitude, I do not consider these higher assets than the posture and devotion I bring to my job. And I have witnessed this in every other present Department Head, who incidentally are also credentialled at or beyond the appropriate levels for their positions.

The value of the Town's Department Heads far exceeds whatever credentials we may be able to flash. Yet we are the most exposed to the conventional public sentiment of lack of value. This has never deterred me, or the other present Department Heads, as I have observed their commitment, diligence, and focus, in spite of the headwinds of this sentiment and other hardships. And it is particularly disheartening when our leadership would seem to foment and leverage this stereotypical public sentiment rather than stand up to it in acknowledging our value by openly expressing and backing it in appropriate and meaningful ways.

Though I have not set an actual date, after 31+ years, I am nearing the end of my career. I have enjoyed my time as Public Works Director here and feel fulfilled in a number of ways with what I've been able to be part of. I have appreciated the support of Mayors and Town Councils alike, as we have been partners together in what has been accomplished.

And as a Town resident who has recently finished and moved into our retirement home in Ledyard, I have been and will remain vested in Ledyard beyond my official duties as an employee. As such, I feel a better balance can be brought to the budgeting posture that will not only preserve the gains in municipal infrastructure that we have realized together over the last three decades, but will also appropriately reduce the pressure on the taxpayers.

I know this won't be easy, so I wish you well in this.

Sincerely,

Steve Masalin

Steven E. Masalin, P.E.



Public Works Director, Town of Ledyard
741 Colonel Ledyard Hwy.
Ledyard, CT 06339
(860) 464-3238
www.ledyardct.org