

Comments by Justin Keenan

Good evening,

I am sorely disappointed in the City after news broke of a hearing to raise our utilities bill being held in the middle of a nationwide "lockdown".

My girlfriend and I are purchasing our first home in Rochester, a city which both of us grew up in, and are already dreading having to shell out additional funds for a system that is already subpar. The article quotes the board as saying "the increases are necessary to... keep the system operating at the high level residents have come to expect". Unfortunately, no one expects a "high level" operation from these utilities as the city council has failed time and time again for years to be able to ensure quality water supplied to households.

According the 2019 Water Quality report for Rochester, NH the fluoride levels in our drinking water is .78 ppm, higher than the HHS' recommendation for acceptable levels. This has been true for multiple years.

Many people in the city already avoid the public water out of fear of health repercussions. Now the board wants to charge more money to pump more of the same chemicals into the water that make it unsafe in the first place. After the recent tax hikes, and continued lack of confidence in leadership, many are extremely disappointed to hear of another potential cost increase to live in a city that fails to grow and adapt at the rate of its neighbors. Rochester needs to stand for the fundamental beliefs of the state, and of the nation, and allow their citizens to live unfettered by beaurocratic oversight determined to nickel and dime every individual until we have succumbed to the overwhelming tax burden. STOP THE SPENDING, STOP THE TAXES.

With regards,
Justin Keenan

Comments from Ray Barnett

Evening I'd like to start off with that I'm pleased to see a tax cap compliant budget. Not happy at all how you got there. It amazes me how the school board manhandles the city council year after year. It appears that the 2021 budget was decided in a smoke filled back room in March. The school board is like the spoiled child, they get everything they ask for. I can't believe that the city is reducing the city side of the budget by 5.7 million dollars and increasing the school budget by almost 6.4 million dollars. It's smoke and mirror time. I realize that \$4.8 million dollars is for paying cash for the CTE Renovation. That should be a bonded item with the funds being drawn against the school budget yearly. Oh, god forbid that will eat into the funds that pay wages and benefits. The school is already getting a yearly contribution from the unassigned fund balance surplus to help offset the yearly P & I payment. In March the council passed a resolution transferring \$1.6 million dollars from the general fund unassigned fund balance surplus to the school building capital reserve fund. Back in January the council approved supplemental appropriations giving the school department an additional \$2.54 million dollars. So this year, \$4.2 million dollars more have been appropriated above and beyond the \$64,981,084 dollar school budget that was adopted in June of 2019.

So now, the school department sent a budget proposal of \$72.7 million dollars, an increase of \$6.4 million dollar increase like it's nothing. They want what they want, and they get what they want.

Apparently the school department just doesn't care if the city has to give up \$5.7 million dollars for important issues and projects. This is certainly not a new tactic by the school board. The school board submitted a budget proposal for FY 19 that was 3.1 million dollars over the tax cap. They did not budge an inch. The final product was a budget that was \$1.71 million over the tax cap. During that budget cycle, 50 budget adjustment were made. Cuts were made on the city side to get the number down. Take from the city and give to the school. Again, the school didn't give up a thing. During the June 12, 2018 council meeting Councillor Lauterborn stated that this is the first time in the history of the implementation of the City's tax cap that the city side of the budget has been significantly cut in order to support the school side of the budget She went on to say that the city council has made cuts in almost every department this evening, except for the school department. She questioned if the school had any other areas that could be considered to be reduced in the amount of increase which is being requested. Of course her question wasn't answered that evening, but I believe that the answer was NO.

If the council is considering cutting \$5.7 million dollars from the city side of the budget, instead of giving it away to the spoiled child, give it to us taxpayers in the form of reduced taxes. If the city is so willing to reduced its budget by millions of dollars, maybe the city has been scamming the taxpayers out of millions of dollars over the last few years.

Since the city is so generous with our money to pay for the CTE renovation, I hope the school board will fess up 2 or 3 million dollars a year out of their budget to help pay for the 22 million dollar DPW facility, the 30 million dollar waste water treatment plant and a new 4 million dollar fire station.

The time for creative finance has got to come to an end. It is already apparent that this council doesn't have a problem passing supplemental appropriations at the drop of a hat. I believe the city is not worried about the reduction in funds because they already know they will just pass supplement appropriations for what ever funds they need. Thus bypassing the budget process and the tax cap calculations. If that's already in the plan, would that be illegal?

The council should reject this budget as proposed, reinstate the \$5.7 million dollars to the city side of the budget, and change the \$5.3 million dollars in cash CIP to bonded. Sit down and work out a tax cap compliant budget that's fair to the taxpayer.

Thank you
Ray Barnett
Crimson lane