

STATEMENT TO TOWN COUNCIL ON MONDAY MARCH 23, 2015

My name is Tracy Rittenhouse. I am a Mansfield resident (@ 18 Little Lane). I'm here with my two kids, my preschooler Leland, and my 1st grader at Goodwin Aubrey, and my wonderful husband Chad. I also serve on the executive board of the Goodwin PTO.

I came here tonight to tell you that I think it is vitally important to the health and vigor of our community that Town of Mansfield supports our schools. As parents of young kids, my husband and I spend our time escorting kids to gymnastics, swimming classes at Community Center, and B-Day parties. Every night we cook and eat dinner as a family, run many laps around our house playing "I'm going to catch you, you better run", and we read bedtime stories at 8pm. We rarely, if ever, make it to out to public meetings like this one tonight.

But we are here tonight, because you, Town Council, are going to be considering important budget items. We are here tonight to remind you that we are active members of this community. We are here tonight to remind you that what we value most in this community is the PUBLIC SCHOOLS. We choose to live in the Town of Mansfield because of this town has a reputation for well supported public schools. And we expect that Mansfield will continue to live up to this reputation.

I am confident that we are not the only family who wants this. There are many families in Mansfield who feel the way we do. I would like to ask that all people here tonight, who are part of the Goodwin family, please stand.

If you support the following statements, please give a loud (but short) round of applause!

- We love Goodwin!
- We love our Teachers! And also the Administrators and Staff at our school!
- We love the well-rounded education that our children get in Mansfield public schools! This includes art, music, language, PE, robotics, computers, gardening, and the Suzuki music program.
- We want children in classrooms with small class sizes so that teachers have the time to create rich assignments and to provide meaningful, individualized feedback.
- FIVE years of zero to near-zero increases is NOT ENOUGH FUNDS to support our schools.
- We support the BOE proposed 4% increase for the 2015-2016 budget.
- We want you, Town Council, to support our schools, by supporting this budget increase.

We understand that budget decisions are difficult decisions. But we must let our joint values be the basis for these decisions. Mansfield is a community that has historically valued education and demonstrated that commitment to education by allocating financial resources to the public schools. That commitment has waned over the last few years due to difficult financial times. But now is the time to re-establish Mansfield as THE town in CT for raising happy, healthy, educated children. I am here tonight to ask you remember my family, to remember the families who joined me here tonight, and to remember that Mansfield is a town that values education. Please support the must needed budget increase for our schools! Thank you.

Introduction:

Donna Koropatkin

7th grade Language Arts and Literature teacher at MMS School

Residence: Marlborough, CT

"If you think education is expensive, try ignorance."

Derek Bok, president of Harvard, 1971-1990.

Dear Members of the Town Council,

While it pains me that I am not able to be present there tonight, I would like to respectfully submit this letter publically via a colleague. I want to thank each of you for this opportunity to speak about the budget and its impact on Mansfield's education system.

The Mansfield BOE worked hard to find means to support Mansfield's school system. As a 20-year veteran teacher, I'm asking you to support the budget as proposed, though I would like to express a concern that still lingers about one aspect of this proposed budget. From my professional experience, I believe that the main challenge we in education face today is the need for adequate funding to ensure optimally smaller class sizes. Every teacher understands that the burden of appropriate and stellar instruction falls on him/her whether with large or small classes, but we also know, more importantly, that in larger classes of 25-29 students there is also a burden and huge LOSS imparted on each child in that classroom.

Currently in 7th grade, we face classrooms with up to 25-29 students in them. There is no other way to say it: more students per class equals less *teacher time* per student; whether it be having time to give individualized feedback on written work, time for individualized conferencing with each student, time for parent contacts to seek insight or to share successes, or time to know each student on a personal level. All of these issues and more are critical to student success.

The truth is, policy can keep *increasing* the number of desks and students in a classroom, but there is nothing policy can do to increase the *teacher time* during that class period to adequately individualize instruction and assess student progress besides *limiting* the number of students per class. *Teacher time* is a limited resource, and the lack of it is a burden that falls squarely and unfairly on the students.

"[Research has] found that the learning gains students made in classes of 13 to 17 students persisted long after the students moved back into average-size classes. Follow-up studies through the years have found the students who had been in small classes in their early years had better academic and personal outcomes throughout their school years and beyond.[1]"
Please do not short-change our students' educational experience. It is unfair to them and speaks volumes about us as a community. As Nelson Mandela said, "*There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.*" The way we fund or

don't fund education is one measureable means of how we treat our children. Please make the necessary funds available for smaller class sizes.

Further, "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" indicates that students must feel physically and emotionally safe in order to learn. We serve as surrogate parents each day; and among other things, we protect, educate, nurture, and work to foster a love of learning within each child. That requires knowing each student, which takes *teacher time*, and in smaller classes, each student receives more *teacher time*. Give us smaller classes so we can get to know them as the remarkable, interesting, curious young people they are!

There are so many rewards to teaching as the result of *teacher time*, and some of the best come *after* the teaching moment; like when I receive an email from a former student who writes that she just wants to know how I'm doing. I know she really wants to share her academic success with me because she knew I always believed in her. Or maybe it is when a former student visits me on college break to proudly share how something I taught him in 7th grade helped him in college. And of course, there are those times when students accidentally and sometimes intentionally call me, "Mom." That's when I know I have made an impact ~ because they knew I really understood and believed in them, and so they trusted me. In trust we learn! Finally, one of my most stunning moments came with a young man's visit the week he was going into the Marines. With his family behind him, he handed me his African drum and told me he wanted me to have it. I had taught his LA class African drumming to teach fluency and rhythm of language and writing. I paused and told him I could not take his drum but that I would keep it safe until his own safe return to retrieve it. He agreed. He came last week for his drum. In sum, these moments are the result of *teacher time*, or as I say, *MAGIC TIME*! As Carl Jung points out, "*One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.*"

Mansfield has always had a reputation of high achievement and being ahead of the curve. I, as most teachers in the district, came to this district to participate in and facilitate this educational philosophy of excellence. Therefore, I ask you to please fund Mansfield's educational system with *learning* and *warmth* in mind.

With much respect for your time, effort, and continued commitment to the education of the children of Mansfield,

Donna Koropatkin

[1] "Class Size." *Educationweek.com*. Web. 10 Feb. 2015.



Brian Coleman
26 Centre ST
Mansfield Center CT
October 25, 2014

Matthew Hart/Town Council
Town Manager
Audrey P Beck Municipal Building
4 South Eagleville Road, Storrs, CT 06268

Dear Mr. Hart, Town Council Members et al,

Please regard this as my written and formal complaint in regards to Deputy Mayor Paul Shapiro's behavior during the October 14, 2014 Town Council Meeting. Mr. Shapiro's comments during the rental certification zone expansion discussion were intentionally directed at me. He referred to me as being disingenuous on my August 25th public comments and the articles I sited. I provide links, dates or the entire article as well as a written statement with my public comments. My opinion on the rental ordinances in Mansfield and how they affect our Constitutional rights is just that, an opinion. My interpretation of the articles surely can differ from that of Shapiro's but in no way am I being deceitful, dishonest or untruthful. This was a deliberate attempt to defame my character and undermine my credibility. I also provided a link of a USA Today article on the opinion of the ACLU on rental inspections in Hampton Va. Mr. Shapiro attempted to discredit them by bringing up totally unrelated topic, abortion. In attempt to further discredit me and the ACLU he went on a rant on how the ACLU was wrong to have no restrictions on a woman's right to choose. I am not sure what this has to do with rental inspections other than another attempt to discredit me and the material I submit. Mr. Shapiro violated the council rules of procedure (rule 5) decorum when he attacked my character and credibility with his accusations of me being dishonest, and insinuations of the ACLU being unworthy based on an unrelated topic. I expect an apology at the next council meeting on October 27, 2014 from Mr. Shapiro

Sincerely,

Brian Coleman

Mansfield Citizen

Ray Haddad

129 Conantville Road

Mansfield Center, CT 06250

Mansfield Town Council

Audrey P Beck Municipal Building

4 South Eagleville Road, Storrs, CT 06268

Dear Madam Mayor, Councillors and Mansfield Department Heads,

In response to a memorandum forwarded to the Town Manager regarding the issues presented by the department heads, I offer these comments.

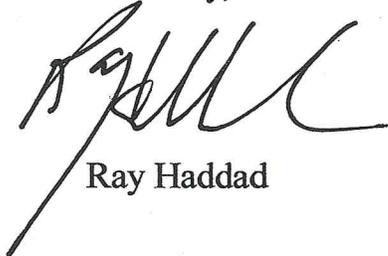
These individuals and department heads need to be reminded that they serve the people of Mansfield. While admitting to this and to the need to be responsive to the needs and desires of the people they serve, they offer a sense of only wishing to face agreement, never dissent or disagreement. Stating that they fear for their lives is an exaggeration that is ludicrous. If they are not up to the job they are required to do, they do have the same option that any other worker does. They are free to leave the employ of the town of Mansfield and of the people who they serve and who pay their salary.

If they truly fear for their lives, then perhaps there is a reason for that fear which they need to examine. As an example, for the past 17 years, there had not been any attention paid to the school board of finance here in Mansfield. As a result of that, a fraud and theft of embarrassing proportions occurred under the management of these very people. This incident, unfortunately, casts a gloom across all of Mansfield and the management of Mansfield. How many other places will this kind of fraud and abuse be found? Can

they seriously wonder why their actions are falling under increased scrutiny? Can they really be serious in demanding that they do not fall under such scrutiny? I suggest to them that they begin now to rapidly expose any and all fraud and abuse on their own before it is found and they become the blame for it. After all, being the finger pointing individual is protected by law while being complicit by ignoring it is not. Yes, indeed, the State Police might be needed so, please, do invite them to attend council meetings. When the next case of fraud and abuse is revealed, it will save a great deal of time. The department heads need to be reminded that as whistle blowers they may face rewards rather than penalties. The time to decide is now. It will be too late the next time fraud is discovered and it is revealed that they did nothing to stop it or report it.

Rather than live or exist in fear of their sometimes unhappy customers, they should look at those moments as an opportunity to become a part of a much larger solution rather than bemoan their situation as being untenable.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ray Haddad', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left and then curves back under the name.

Ray Haddad

Arthur A. Smith
74 Mulberry Road
Mansfield, CT 06250

Mansfield Town Council

March 23, 2015

Dear Town Council Members:

I attended the Finance Committee held earlier this evening and have several questions about new accounting controls that have been suggested to remedy accounting practices now in place.

(1) In the March 9th packet there was included a 1989 contract between the Town of Mansfield and the University of Connecticut. The contract was for a 5 year term with renewals on a year to year basis thereafter. Since 1994, how many renewals have occurred, where are those renewed contracts? If the contract was terminated, under what subsequent contract did the Town of Mansfield expand its obligation to maintain an enlarged pump station? If such expanded service was provided outside of a Town Council motion or contractual obligation, will new accounting controls address unilateral actions by Town Administration that obligate the Town to increased expenditures?

(2) In the February 10th town Council packet, the BlumShaprio accounting audit notes that the "town" reclassified a sizable value of construction in process that had been capitalized in **prior years**, for how many years did this accounting mistake occur? Did it have an impact on the Town's Bond Rating, by showing more assets than the Town in fact had, and improving our Fund Balance? If the Town had bonded out during a period of falsely inflated assets, would the town be subject to sanctions under the Security Exchange Commission ("SEC")? (See, SEC v. City of Harrisburg, for Fraudulent Public Statements, attached). Is there any risk now for representations made over that 3 year period? What accounting controls are now in practice to avoid this type of SEC violation? [Capitalization is defined as "an **accounting** method used to delay the recognition of expenses by recording the expense as long-term assets]

(3) Under what authority, can the Town Manager deny Town Councilors' requested information?

Thank you,



Town of Mansfield

A Resolution Declaring Mansfield a Near Zero Waste Community

WHEREAS, Chapter 161, Article 5 of the Mansfield Solid Waste Ordinances empowers the Mansfield Resource Recycling Authority to improve waste reduction, reuse and recycling in the Town and assist with the development and implementation of town wide resource conservation and sustainability programs; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Mansfield has positioned itself as an environmental leader among Connecticut communities, by offering a broad array of recycling and reuse options in the community including a swap shop, a regional repair café, on-site school composting, textile, paint, fluorescent bulb and electronics recycling at the transfer station, offering the Celebrate Mansfield Festival as a low waste event, committing to energy efficiency and renewable energy by participating in the Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge and Solarize Mansfield, and pledging to be a Clean Energy Community; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Mansfield is committed to protecting and enhancing environmental quality in the community now and for future generations; and

WHEREAS, by increasing reuse and recycling, the Town of Mansfield can keep valuable materials circulating in the local economy, spurring economic growth; and

WHEREAS the Zero Waste philosophy accepts that the earth's ability to support life is finite and that natural resources must be used in the most efficient and sustainable way possible; and

WHEREAS, the guiding principles of Zero Waste are: managing resources instead of waste, conserving natural resources through waste prevention and recycling, turning discarded resources into jobs and new products instead of trash, promoting products and materials that are durable and recyclable, and discouraging products and materials that can only become trash after their use; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 3,300 tons of waste is generated in the Town of Mansfield each year by residents, businesses, and institutions, and approximately 75% of this amount is sent to incineration; and

WHEREAS, Town residents have reached an overall recycling rate of 33 percent, more can be done, especially in removing valuable materials from the waste stream and "closing the loop" by purchasing products made with recycled content; and

WHEREAS, the placement of recyclable materials in waste disposal facilities, such as incinerators and landfills, wastes natural resources, wrongly transfers liabilities to future generations, and has the potential to cause damage to human health; and

WHEREAS, avoiding the creation of waste or discards in the first place is the most economically efficient and environmentally sustainable resource management strategy; and

WHEREAS, waste prevention, reuse, recycling, and composting are material management options that conserve resources while reducing environmental impacts; and

WHEREAS, with the appropriate economic incentives, manufacturers can and will produce and businesses will sell products that are durable and repairable and that can be safely recycled back into the marketplace or nature; and

WHEREAS, increasingly, U.S. and international governments and organizations are adopting the policy that the financial responsibility of collecting, recycling, and disposing of materials belongs with producers; and

WHEREAS, government is ultimately responsible for leading by example and establishing criteria needed to eliminate waste, and for creating the economic and regulatory environment in which to achieve it.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Town Council of the Town of Mansfield, Connecticut: The Town Council hereby declares the Town of Mansfield a *Near Zero Waste Community*. A *Near Zero Waste Community* can be achieved through action plans and measures that significantly reduce waste and pollution. These measures will include encouragement of residents, businesses and agencies to judiciously use, reuse, and recycle materials, and motivation of businesses to manufacture and market less toxic and more durable, repairable, reusable, recycled, and recyclable products. The Town hereby establishes an intermediate goal of reducing its residential waste stream and meeting the State's Solid Waste Management Plan goal of 58% by 2024. Be it further

resolved that Mansfield will support initiatives at the state level that move Connecticut closer to 80% diversion by 2030.

This resolution shall become effective upon adoption.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have set my hand and caused the seal of the Town of Mansfield to be affixed on this 23rd day of March in the year 2015.

Elizabeth C. Paterson
Mayor, Town of Mansfield