

C.J. Thomas, 18 Hobart Street, Farmington Town Council Chair.

I made comments at our last Council meeting regarding directions on the budget that I would like to restate and put in context tonight.

I am confident that The Town Council will be passing a budget for fiscal year 2020 – 2021 that will have no tax increase. The reasons for this should be quite obvious: The COVID-19 virus has led to the loss hundreds of thousands of lives, much of the business world has shut down, the world economy has collapsed and millions of people have lost their jobs. I have heard from many residents that they need and support no tax increase this year. I do feel strongly that we should avoid layoffs when possible.

Trying to find a middle ground, the Town Council asked the Town Manager, the Superintendent of schools and the BOE to:

- Approach the various bargaining groups and seek a hard freeze in salaries to achieve a \$331,000 in savings on the Town side and \$1.2 million of savings on the BOE side. A freeze means no town or school employees would be given a raise in a year where those who would pay that increase, namely tax payers, are in such financial distress.
- If the Townwide unions do not agree to a freeze in salaries, then a list of reductions equaling \$331,000 should be provided by the Town Manager. The Town Manager indicated this would result in layoffs.
- The Town Council may set the BOE budget, but it is those members who determine how that money is spent. I have the utmost confidence in the BOE to do so in the best way possible for our community.
- Identify \$615,000 in capital reductions in the town capital budget.
- Identify \$615,000 in the BOE capital budget.
- This would reduce the overall capital budget by \$1,230,000.
- Request the Town Manger and Finance Director look at all aspects of the FY20/21 proposed budget to find any savings that will help achieve a 0% tax increase.

I have been asked if we can guarantee job security for the duration of the year. The answer is NO. Although it is my great hope that there will be no layoffs, we cannot predict what effect this catastrophic economic situation will have on our tax receipts. Quite simply, we need tax dollars to pay our bills. If no dollars are coming in, we must reduce our costs.

Farmington has offered a tax deferment of three months to those taxpayers financially affected by COVID-19. This will result in a minimum of a short term cash shortfall and possibly a significant loss of revenues. As the fiscal authority in Farmington, it is the Town Council's responsibility to consider the long term health of our community.

Farmington and Unionville have done a tremendous job in working together during this incredibly difficult time. We have shown our support for the doctors and nurses on the front lines, we have supported those businesses that have remained open. We have supported our residents most in need. We are very grateful to our police, firemen, and those who are performing their jobs in an at-risk environment. We are also appreciative that town employees and school employees adapted to new circumstances in a relatively short amount of time. I am sure parents have a new-found respect for the job our teachers are doing.

We can and will get through these difficult times and I am hopeful and confident we will partner with all of our employees and bargaining units to come out of this as a stronger community.