Dear Members of the BOF/BOS,

At the Board of Education special meeting held on January 21, 2021, the Eastford Board of Education approved its 2021/22 budget at $4,269,030, which represents a $253,810 (6.32%) increase over the current fiscal year. After careful review and reductions, the approved budget, as presented, basically accommodates our increased costs for staffing, benefits and tuitions.

It was possible to keep the increase to only 6.32% by reductions in the following:

- reducing the budgeted number of special education paraprofessionals.
- making reductions in facilities, supplies, equipment, and dues and fees.
- The Woodstock Academy not increasing their regular student tuition next year.
- EastConn regular education transportation costs not increasing next year.
- not accommodating such potential expenses as an additional outplacement.

It is important to note that:

- In 2019/20, we had unanticipated other high school tuitions, additional high school special education costs and outplacements that were not included in the 2019/20 budget – due to closing for COVID we were able to apply savings in other areas against these costs.
- In 2020/21, we have additional high school special education tuitions and outplacement charges that were not included in the 2020/21 budget. If we are lucky, these unanticipated charges will be offset by the COVID money we receive to replenish accounts and by our not hiring a paraprofessional that was in the current budget for this school year.
- Approximately $196,427 (4.892%) of the total dollar increase in our proposed budget is the result of additional high school special education tuitions, grade 8 or transfer students attending high schools other than WA, and outplacement charges not included in the 2020/21 budget.
- Smaller class sizes are one of the benefits that we are able to offer our students at Eastford Elementary School. This year, due to our class sizes, we were able to blend some of our grade level configurations, allowing us to provide for the recommended mitigating strategies, including 6ft of social distancing without resorting to hybrid instruction or hiring additional staff during the COVID pandemic. It is still uncertain to what degree the need to provide for mitigating strategies will continue to be needed in the 2021/22 school year.
- As part of the Community Conversation held in the fall of 2018, families favored maintaining Eastford Elementary School even if it meant an increase in taxes.

Thank you for your ongoing support of our Eastford students. Please do not hesitate to contact me concerning any questions you may have.

Donna P. Leake, PhD

“Shaping Futures Together”
www.eastfordct.org