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Date: December 9, 2019
To: School Committee
From: Everett V. Olsen, Jr.
RE: Fiscal 2021 Budget Letter of Transmittal

I am presenting you with the first draft of our FY2021 school system budget. This budget was developed after many conversations with the Leadership Team and unending assistance from Ingrid Nilsson and Kerry Clery.

Over the past 30 years, Westford superintendents have initially prepared a budget that maintains the level of services to students and improves the school system. This year, at the direction of the School Committee, I have prepared a budget that meets the Town Manager's increase to the school system of 2.4% above our current FY2020 appropriation.

Our annual school system budget is driven by factors such as the following:

- Enrollment
- State and Federal mandates
- Complexity of student needs; both academic and social/emotional
- Staff training
- State and local revenues
- New or emerging priorities based on research and best practices

In the development of the FY2021 school system budget, I have attempted to address the following priorities:

- Preserve direct instructional services in the classroom
- Preserve academic support services
- Maintain a pupil/teacher ratio of 22:1 in grades K-5 and 25:1 in grades 6-12
- Attempt to fund the Special Education tuition account for current and anticipated placements
- Continue our ability to provide strong curriculum coordination
- Maintain safe, clean and healthy school facilities
- Scale our staffing and expenses to a declining enrollment

The significant unknown at this time is the cost of implementing revised school start times in the 2020-2021 school year. Once the Citizen Advisory Committee presents its report on December 16, I will work with the bus contractors and our staff to assess the cost of both regular and special education transportation services.

Finally, we are presenting the budget in a different format this year with both narrative comments and slides throughout this initial document. As we proceed through the next several months we will continue to provide you with the information necessary to understand how and where our money is budgeted and expended. We have an exceptional school system, and I will do everything possible to maintain its quality and my commitment to our students, staff and residents.