

(Excerpted from an email to Marsha Germek dated March 12)

At the town meeting on March 11, there were a lot of people present in support of Bay Aging—Meals on Wheels and Bay Transit. Many elderly and/or disabled people talked about how Bay Transit provides a vital source of transportation for medical appointments, work, school, and shopping and spoke about the necessity for Meals on Wheels. There were also people there in support of Gloucester's non-profits and the school budget.

Walter Priest did a great job of speaking for GHP and explaining the fact that they more than triple the money the county gives them through grants and other sources that match funds. And that is true of the other non-profits, too—especially the Free Clinic which yields a huge return on every dollar. If the budget stays the way it is with these 50% cuts for the non-profits, (90% cut for the Laurel Shelter!!!) then it will be really disastrous.

The Samaritan Group is already pushed to the limit with requests as it is, and if Bay Transit has to cut back, people will lose jobs, the opportunity for education, the opportunity for health care when needed.

The Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Supervisors and the School Board were there to listen. The two supervisors (who were elected on their promise not to raise taxes) seemed very surprised at how many people were there and how much support was voiced for these organizations. They hedged a lot in saying “This is just the budget as presented. No decisions have been made yet. It is good for us to hear what the citizens think.”

This is just the beginning of a very tough budget cutting season. It appears that budget cuts are being framed as a choice between the school system's needs versus the needs of the nonprofit groups. That is a very false premise. And it is not as if the money the county gives to support the nonprofits is a really significant amount, either. But there is a lot of angst about what it will cost to open Page Middle School. We've known that was coming! The School Budget is another very big subject.

I am very, very worried about how Community Education will come out of this budget season. The work they do is invaluable. There is just no way to calculate all the good that has come out of their leadership in the schools and community at large.

It is going to be really important for representatives of local nonprofits and/or the schools to come out and support their groups publicly. It is very important to rally your supporters to attend these meetings—as large a number as possible—and then have the speaker to ask them all to stand, and encourage them to keep standing for a minute or so by asking questions of them—ex. “How many of you have been assisted by the work of (the non-profit)... or, how many of you have volunteered your time in support of

If you can't make it to one of the meetings, please email or call the supervisors. Be sure and send your email to all of them. Below are attachments to give you the schedule of public budget hearings and contact information for the Board of Supervisors and School Board. Please urge your supporters to use the contact lists below and let their representatives know how they feel.

(You may have to highlight and then right click on these links to open them.)

[Board of Supervisors \(BOS\) Contact List](#)

[School Board \(SB\) Contact Email Link](#)