

Minutes of the **VILLAGE BOARD REGULAR MEETING** of the Board of Trustees of the Village/Town of Mount Kisco held on Monday, April 8, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in the Frank J. DiMicco Board Room, Village Hall, 104 Main Street, Mount Kisco, New York and via video conference.

Present: Mayor J. Michael Cindrigh  
Deputy Mayor Theresa Flora  
Trustee Lisa C. Abzun  
Trustee Angie Guerra  
Trustee Karen B. Schleimer

Also Present: Edward Brancati, Village Manager  
Kenneth Famulare, Assistant Village Manager  
Anna Georgiou, Village Counsel

Absent:

**Monday, April 8, 2024**  
**7:00 p.m. Regular Meeting**

Call in#646-558-8656 or 888-788-0099  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87043761605>  
Zoom ID: 870 4376 1605

**Para ver esta reunión en español:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/@mountkiscoenespanol/streams>

This meeting can be seen in its entirety here: <https://vimeo.com/930072753>

Mayor Cindrigh opened the meeting on eclipse day and hoped everyone enjoyed it; he asked everyone to join him in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Public Hearing – Budget FY 2024-2025 (Continuation)**

Mayor Cindrigh began, this meeting is a continuation of a meeting that was held a week ago. We had some concerns that people were on vacation. So, we're continuing the public hearing on the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budget. We have a list of people that would like to speak. If you spoke last week, I ask that you refrain from speaking until everybody else has had an opportunity.

Jean Farber of Glassbury Court, Mayor Cindrigh and members of the Village Board. I'm here this evening on this side of the podium as a huge supporter and advocate of the Mount Kisco Arts Council. I was there at the very beginning, so let me give you a brief history for those who might not know. Well, over ten years ago, when I was on your side of the table serving with Mayor Cindrigh and Trustee Schleimer. Mike personally asked me to see if I could put together a group of interested artists, musicians, and residents to support an arts council. At the time, there were very many false starts, planned meetings, lack of cohesion. Every participant had their own agenda and all lacked follow through. Remember that I can go through some names, I'm not going to, but there were lots of false starts. Then I had a chance meeting with Lisa Abzun, who was one of the few who showed up for our Halloween decorating contest along the storefronts of Main Street and South Moger with children's Halloween drawings. We were trying everything we could to try and get some excitement for art. I believe that the two of us were the only ones who showed up that day, and then Lisa and I began a discussion about a local arts council's goals and dreams and what might that be? Then we did begin that journey. Our first meeting with Ed Brancati included Beth Vetare and Allan Reingold, who soon joined us. We got some seed money from the Village at that time and found our first pop up space on South Moger. Our very first open house for our very first gallery show was a huge success. We featured so many local artists, including

works by our dear beloved friend Andre Ferrara, who just passed away last week, and whose funeral will be tomorrow. I treasure all the photos that we have of his drawing, and for many different reasons, Andre made such a difference in our community. We asked the Village for an annual budget of \$10,000. With that money, we created a summer concert series, a winter classical jazz series in the library, art shows, Friday night community hangouts, collaborations with the Fox Lane Fashion Design program, and two standing room only fashion shows with Fox Lane students. Those are just some of the ways that the money has been spent. Meanwhile, I can tell you that \$10,000 is really not enough. Individual members have gone into their own pockets to supply free water for the concerts, it doesn't just come out of nowhere, and food for celebrations, cleaning supplies and even toilet paper for the pop ups. Then there was Lisa, Elizabeth, and Beth on their hands and knees, pulling up old carpet and painting the walls so we could save some money and have a clean space for our galleries. You guys have no idea what really goes on behind the scenes. As the current treasurer of the Arts Council, me, I can assure you that every single dime is accounted for and extremely well spent. I was told, I was actually told not to do this, but sometimes, very rarely, I don't listen. Instead of cutting us back from \$10,000, I propose an increase in our budget. Our Arts Council has brought a positive energy into town, has played an undeniable role in this community by fostering creativity, bringing people downtown, enriching lives, and most importantly, bringing people together. Mike, I think we have really done what you asked me to do. We've created a vibrant, community-based council for the Arts. Please let us continue our mission. We need more support from each of you, not less. Thank you for allowing me to appear before you, and to speak my mind. Thank you.

Barbara Schainman: I, too, am a member of the Arts Council. I live at 4 Gerber Court in Mount Kisco, and I am also a member of the Arts Council and have been for about five years. The Arts Council is a small group that does an amazing amount of work, and in my five-year tenure, the volume of diversified activities, diversified art exposures, the hundreds of people who participate every year, not just in concerts that can vary in size, but in the myriad of activities that I have seen has been unbelievably impressive and an enormous amount of work for a small group of people. These are people who have opted for lack of funds, bringing in carpenters and painters. There were no supplies. We provided the supplies and paid for the supplies. So, I must say, when I listened to the potential of a cut, and which to me was wasn't a cut of a concert, it was a cut of 10% of the amount and the way we've been able to expand to cover up the needs of what we think the community has asked for and wants and continues to want. So, when I watched the recording of your budget meeting, I remain disillusioned and disappointed at the thought of any reduced funding. So, I've appreciated the amounts that you've done and I am really going to ask that all board members at this point take a look at the Facebook page in just trying to remember in my tenure here, so many of the incredible activities that we've participated in. I was just amazed, as I think you will be, and I hope it will convince you to pay more attention. Come and enjoy, along with community members, so much of what we do and rather than cut that figure, ask how much more? Yet, if you ask the Arts Council their dreams and expansions and even more that we're ready and able to do if we have the proper funding. I want to pay particular attention to what has been done for students because I think over the last two or three years, the inroads that have been made through an amazing teacher at Fox Lane, Lindsey Lappin-Burke, and Aspire students that she has identified to come and work with us has not just opened up an amazing opportunity for a small group of Aspire students, but again, for hundreds of students. I don't know if any of you participated or watched the fashion shows over the last two years. There's a relatively new department that opened up with incredible talent, incredible enthusiasm from those who participated and created and from many of the juniors and seniors and even younger students who served as models for the designs that these students made. To watch the parents come in, to watch the support of students for their students in the arts is something that I think Mount Kisco can be proud of. And I know how proud the Arts Council was of that endeavor. Additionally, I think most moving for me was watching a local group of disabled students and young adults and the art show that we were able to provide for them, for their families, for their teachers. These people walked in with opportunities that they've never had before with praise and respect for work that they'd done, seeing their work up, seeing all of the partying and support for them because of what they'd done. So, I ask you to take a look at the Facebook page, because that's the best that we can show you right now. Pay attention to what has been done. Take a look at the dreams that this group has. Never think of cutting, but only think of what else this community can do. This is a reason that when I spoke with some people at an outdoor pop-up show that students put together, and I asked two young families that were there

what made them come to Mount Kisco? Both said one had children interested in the arts and the other came because they knew of the support for the arts and they were delighted to be there. So, thanks for the opportunity and I hope it's meaningful to you. Thank you.

I'm Tony Giardina. My wife Angela is with me. We are property owners and taxpayers in Mount Kisco. As has been my family for over 100 years, we are here in support of the Mount Kisco Arts Council. The Village has a \$26,500,000 budget in which there is a \$10,000 line item to fund the Mount Kisco Arts Council. It's a very relatively small amount, considering the budget. You could almost consider it to be in the category of a rounding error. Think of the \$10,000 not as an expense, but as an investment in the Village that will encourage people to want to live here and others to want to visit the Village, thereby patronizing our stores and restaurants. Mount Kisco is the hub of Northern Westchester and having a thriving art scene will ensure that it remains that way. Thank you.

Angela Giardina: The arts bring us together as a community, whether it's dancing, theater, music, or visual arts such as painting and sculpture. It's something we can all enjoy together. Do not minimize its importance. Thank you All.

Ralph Vigliotti of Meadowbrook Lane, resident for 46 years in the Village. I support the arts here in our Village, in our mini city, in many cities and large towns they support things like this because they are encouraging our young adults to get involved in the arts and whether it be music, visual arts, and other things. I love the pop ups. I enjoy Fountain Park, and I love, as a former principal, watching the kids from Fox Lane High School in the fashion shows and showing off all that they do in their schools, then they bring back to our community. For a couple thousand dollars, I think it would be foolish to cut the budget, never mind raising the budget to support the arts by a couple of thousand dollars. It's another entity of our Village that must be supported, and I encourage you to continue to do that. Let's show off who we are. We support our arts; we support our historical society; we support our fire department and all of the other volunteer groups. Let's rise to the occasion and find another place to remove \$2,000 so we can all survive and do well in the village. Basically, it's just a good feeling when you approach any of the functions that the Arts Council is doing. It's a goose bump feeling sometimes, and I'll take those goose bumps any day. Thank you for listening. Appreciate it.

Everybody. Daniel Blake, 47 Beverly Road. So, when I first moved to Mount Kisco with my family in 2017, and I'm a professional musician, I produce concerts for over 20 years now. I came here to not only raise my family, but find an artistic community. I met Trustee Lisa Abzun, and I realized I met a kindred spirit, somebody who saw in the arts the potential to bring people together around a shared humanity. There's nothing else I believe in this world that can bring people together in the way that creativity can. So, we worked together. I stepped back from the Arts Council a few years ago, but for a few years there we were. We were producing an eight concert series, as you know, in Fountain Park, which brought a wide range of musical artists to the Village from all over the place, from the city or all around the area. This brought families together with their strollers, brought picnics, and concert goers of all ages and backgrounds with lawn chairs. We had kids running free, it was just, I can't think of many community events that I've been to that kind of embody what a community organization can do like the Mount Kisco Arts Council (MKAC) did with those concerts, and these concerts continue to this day. They're joined by a wide roster of other events that would be the envy of a venerable arts institution with a much larger budget, let alone one on a budget like the one that was described by the previous speakers. So, the budget under discussion tonight satisfies what I, as a professional concert producer, can assure this room is the bare minimum of expenses needed to put on a year of free events for this town. These events are free and open to the public. These arts events add immeasurably to the qualitative experience of life in this Village. It's all too easy to consider the arts as an expendable line item in a budget. But consider this, imagine a young artist who got their first chance to perform a paid gig in front of a live audience or a budding fashion designer who took a daring creative risk and found the courage to show their work in front of their peers in a live fashion show, or perhaps a friend group who stumbled into their first live art show in their hometown and experienced that sense of pride about seeing a pop-up art gallery in their own town. Imagine a young couple looking to buy a home who sealed the deal only after they stroll past the idyllic scene of families enjoying a free outdoor concert series in the town that they might choose to live in. This is the kind of impact that even minimal arts funding like that offered to MKAC can

have. There's no substitute for this kind of impact. I urge the board to maintain funding to Mount Kisco Arts Council at its current level and to resist the urge to enact austerity on the backs of hard-working artists who add so much to this community. Thank you.

Alex Smoller: What he said. That was awesome. Dan, that was amazing. So, me too. Oh, sorry, I'm Alex Smoller and I live at 1 Leonard Street. We've been residents here since 2007, back when you were Mayor before and I was also the chairman of the Economic Development Council at the end of your tenure.

Mayor Cindrich asked, Do you want to be on it?

Mr. Smoller replied, no, I think you've got some competent people in there, more competent than I was. But anyway, the arts council, the funding that's being cut from the arts council seems ridiculous. \$10,000, as this gentleman said, seems like a rounding error, I think reducing that amount of funding from the Arts Council seems like, like something personal. It doesn't seem like it benefits our Village. It seems like it's a detriment to our Village and I would really encourage you to reconsider that. Okay. The next thing that I'm interested in or concerned about is the community policing that's going to be removed from our Village. The positive impact that community policing has had with our Latino community has been huge. It's become a program that's looked at as an example of that type of programming. Removing that program from our community is going to diminish the relationship that our Latino community has with the police, which is possible to lead us into public safety issues that we can't think of right now, reverse some of the benefits that have happened in our town as a result of the community policing, the benefit that our elementary school has from that. So, I really consider the impact that removing that program from our village is going to have. This town right now is revitalized. You know, back in 2007, when we moved here, sidewalks were busted up, streets were potholed, storefronts were empty and dark. If you walk around the Village now, you see the opposite. You see a town revitalized. You see new sidewalks. You see storefronts full. You see arts in the streets. You see concerts. You guys have been given a gift, this town is in great shape. I would implore you not to reverse that. Thank you.

Good evening. My name is Jessica Colon, and I live at 68 Washburn Road here in beautiful Mount Kisco. I've been here for three years, and the first thing I want to say is that I love Mount Kisco. It didn't take me a long time to fall in love with the Village for a lot of reasons. Before we moved in here there were a couple of things that were important to me, as a mom was the school district, as a Latina was the good community of Latino groups, and as an artist was the Arts Council. I'm a big believer in community programs, and I've tried my best since I've gotten here to bring all of that together. So, with that, I'm going to read a little something I wrote. So, I've come here today to just express deep concerns regarding any type of budget cutting that has to do with the Mount Kisco Art Council. As a newly elected co-chair of the Council, I am passionate about the arts. I'm a supporter of community programming and I feel compelled to emphasize the potential of the repercussions of these cuts on our organization's ability to fulfill its mission and effectively serve our community for over a decade. As you all know, the Mount Kisco Arts Council has been a cornerstone of our community. A champion of diversity, fostering creativity, providing vital support to local students, artists, and performers. Our diverse array of program events and initiatives have significantly enhanced the culture, vibrancy, and the quality of life in Mount Kisco. That's what brought me here. I considered all of this as I stepped into the role as co-chair and invested my time in working together with these wonderful ladies that I consider my friends and putting really good programming together. It hasn't been easy, I understand. You know what, that's the significance of a budget. I get that, I have a nonprofit, I absolutely understand that, but there's some things that you just have to show support. I'm glad to meet Dan, Dan and I have spoken, but we've never met, Dan is going to be performing at the Mount Kisco summer concerts, and I appreciate you Dan, because it is hard to try to fit into a budget, all of these wonderful musicians that we want to perform. Thank goodness for you and other musicians that can work within this small budget of ours. It's truly important to show the artists, the performers, the musicians, their value, and I don't want to undermine that. You know, \$10,000 isn't a lot of money, it isn't, and I understand, Mayor, there is a budget. I get that, but certainly any discussion of cutting that, any budget cuts, it just blows my mind. It's shameful, quite honestly. Again, one of the reasons why I love Mount Kisco is the sense of community and bringing that together, it's really important. So, I really just hope you guys understand that, and I hope you guys come and

enjoy our concerts with us. We have a lot of ideas that we want to implement, but we need support from everyone, especially you guys. Gracias, thank you.

Beth Vetare-Civitello of Timber Ridge, I am also one of the co-chairs, the other co-chair of the Arts Council. I have invested a lot of my life in Mount Kisco, and love everything that's been happening of late, and like to see the progress it's made. I'll take a little bit different tact of direction from what you've been hearing already in the fact that the Arts Council and the Arts itself is part of the comprehensive plan. That's a 20-year plan. It's not a one-year plan, it's not a two-year plan, it's a 20-year plan. I think that the idea of moving forward instead of backwards, and hearing that anything might be cut from a very important aspect of life in Mount Kisco is more than disappointing, it's just actually quite offensive. One of the things that we have to talk about is that the arts and culture sector of life is also looked at. I think that's what has happened in cities and towns across the country that have revitalized themselves, has been through the arts. I think that if you are a decision maker, understand that the arts are as important as some of the other things that you're talking about in a budget, which is essential, we've proven that it often comes without a whole lot of big price tags. I think that the idea of taking away any part of that is detrimental to the entire village. Cities across the nation know that this is the way to do it. They know that the arts bring people, they know that it brings artists, they know that it brings children and families together. It is not something that is done in a vacuum. It is not something that is done without results. These are proven results across the nation, and there's data to actually let you know that I'm not just making things up. The arts are important. The Arts Council is important. Mount Kisco is important. I know you all know that; \$10,000 seems to be penny wise and pound foolish. It also seems to me to be very narrow minded to think of cutting it. I live within a budget. I'm assuming most of you live within your own budget. This budget is a very secure budget. Thanks to both Ed, Bob, and Ken, and I'm going to give the Mayor a lot of credit because you've done this a few times and most people are looking forward, not backwards. I would implore you to continue to do the same. Thank you.

Robert D'Agostino, 20 Byram Lake Road, thank you for letting me speak. Mayor and members of the Board, I too, am a lifelong resident of Mount Kisco. I spoke last week, so I will not be too long. I also am a lifelong resident of Mount Kisco, so much so that there is a street named after my grandfather in this town. I'm a 50 plus year proud member of the Union Hook and Ladder Company Number One of the fire departments. I was a police officer for 30 years in this town, retiring as Chief of Police. I'm not as enthusiastic about some of the issues I see in Mount Kisco as others. So accordingly, Mayor, one thing I always deal with is in facts. So, the facts kill rumors, and I'm glad to hear that the Village Board is not cutting the position of the community resource officer, but that the position when you meet with the police command of the County, sounds to me from talking to you, will be reconfigured to address the issues that face Mount Kisco. I've talked to a lot of the police officers that patrol Mount Kisco. They're very good. We talk about how things changed over the 50 years ago since I started to today. But some things never change in police work; crime, narcotics, disorderly conduct, drinking and public abusive behavior, they never change their constant. They're never going to change. So, I was glad to hear that you're not removing the position so the facts are wrong, but that you're going to readdress it to address certain issues that occur in Mount Kisco. Mount Kisco first. That's the way we must look at these issues. I would ask that when you meet with the County command that you drill down, seriously, to find out how much time the respective officer that will be filling this position is in the town. When you consider the contract that is negotiated, there's many issues that come in to negotiate a police contract. I know I've asked a couple of times; I don't know the exact number of days they work per contract, the officer. I don't know if that would vary to the officer that is assigned to Mount Kisco in a specific position to address Mount Kisco issue. If you use a generic of whatever it is, 200 days, 220 days, I don't know. But then we have to take in five- or six-weeks' vacation, personal days, sick time, holidays, comp time, training, couple of days with the firearm and the weapon, conferences, etc. etc. etc... So, I ask that you drill down on a position because crime goes on 24/7/365, doesn't happen when someone leaves or comes, doesn't happen, and it's always going to happen. No matter our greatest efforts to prevent crime, it happens. So, when you renegotiate this contract, I would ask that it address the issues in Mount Kisco and you hammer down to see how many hours that position is filled here. If someone's not here, we're paying for that position. If they're doing something in other towns, if they're involved in some sort of an escort, is it backfilled? If not, is Mount Kisco paying for it? And what is the total number of hours? I've done a rough calculation on my own. Not going to present that right now, but I'm going to address it once I find more

of the numbers, and I think some of the people will be surprised. So, before I leave you, I have heard the word stakeholder bantered around one time too many for me. As a lifelong resident of Mount Kisco, whose grandfather swept these streets, I'm going to tell you right now I'm a stakeholder. Every taxpaying resident and resident and their families are the ultimate stakeholders in Mount Kisco. Mount Kisco, first. I understand that we may have to help other communities, and there's no better neighbor than Mount Kisco. We can go on ad nauseum of what we do for other neighborhoods. You brought that up last week, Mayor, when you were in discussion with someone from the hospital. So, the ultimate stakeholder is the taxpayer and the resident in Mount Kisco. Goodwill, as you know, the ultimate community resource officer, I went ad nauseum with it last week, is the officer on patrol and I will leave anyone that cares to challenge that to this thought. The last train pulls into Mount Kisco at 2:00 in the morning, give or take. I used to have an officer meet that train. So, let's just say your daughter, your son, your mother, your father, you exit that train at about 2:00 a.m. on a dark night in Mount Kisco, raining. How good do you feel when your daughter, your child, you get off that train and you see a marked police unit ready to meet you off of that train. There goes the ultimate community service officer, and I'll guarantee you, if your daughter, your son, your wife, you get off that train, you're like, you know what, it's quiet here, but I like seeing that cop here. I'll leave you with that. Thank you very much, Mayor.

Written Comments received:

## Lizette Davis

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**From:** Aviva Meyer <aviva.meyer@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 8, 2024 4:46 PM  
**To:** Mayor J. Michael Cindrich; Trustee Lisa Abzun; Deputy Mayor Theresa Flora; Trustee Angie Guerra; Trustee Karen Schleimer; Village Manager  
**Subject:** Mount Kisco Budget

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Village Mayor and Trustees,

I am unable to attend the budget hearing tonight but wanted to express my thoughts on this year's budget. I'm very disappointed to hear about possibly cutting the Mount Kisco Arts Council's funding. I just read about the retirement of Janet Langsam, the director of ArtsWestchester, and was touched by something she said — why do people have to travel all the way to the city to museums and shows — why can't they have arts at home? The Mount Kisco Arts Council has been exactly that for Mount Kisco residents. MKAC exposes arts to residents who may not have the means to travel to the city or get away in the summer. MKAC provides activities to seniors and young families close to home. MKAC provides venues for local artists, professional and amateur, to show their work and for their friends and neighbors to see it. MKAC partners with Bedford Central Schools to teach and recognize our community's talented young people. A modest amount spent on art yields dividends back to the village. Having arts in the community attracts people to Mount Kisco, to live, increasing real estate values, and to visit, bringing dollars to our local economy.

Unfortunately, artists have been feeling the same inflationary pressures that we all have. Costs of materials and supplies have risen; artists & sound engineers fees have gone up. I will point out the Arts Council is asking for a modest increase in funding, because with inflation in the last years, even keeping the funding flat IS a cut. This applies to the other volunteer led community organizations as well, such as the Historical Society, CAC and others — I'm not involved directly in them, but I recognize the value they bring to Mount Kisco and how all these volunteer organizations work synergistically together to make a great village. It is amazing what a few dedicated volunteers can do to with little funds. But these organizations all need something to be able to capitalize on — I hope you consider the exponential impact of this small investment in the budget.

I do also want to touch on the importance of a Community Resource Officer in the village. It seems to me penny-wise but pound-foolish to cut off a program that has barely begun, but made great strides in the short time that the officer has been in the community. I also worry at the apparent conflating of two new programs, assuming the Mobile Crisis Response Team will take care of what the CRO does; they address two different challenges and are not the same. The presence of a CRO is to give a friendly, safe way for the community, particularly the most vulnerable, to interact with police, rather than all interactions only being of a punitive nature. The MCRTs are there to address situations where a mental health response is more appropriate than a law enforcement response, and to do it with mental health professionals rather than police. The CRO and MCRTs can (and have) work together in the community. But they are two different tools, both of which were recommended in the County's Police Reimagining Task Force.

I will also point out that the most vulnerable community, which our CRO has done a great job of reaching out to, is not likely to come to a board meeting or write a letter to the board expound on the benefits. But part of the community resource officer's job is to make reports to the board and has been a successful connection between the community, the police and the government. Please consider keeping this valuable resource.

Thank you for listening.

Aviva Meyer

227 Grove St.

## Lizette Davis

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**From:** Mike McGuirk <mikemcguirk@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 8, 2024 5:56 PM  
**To:** Mayor J. Michael Cindrich; Deputy Mayor Theresa Flora; Trustee Karen Schleimer; Trustee Lisa Abzun; Trustee Angie Guerra; Village Manager  
**Subject:** Budget hearing comments

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mayor Cindrich and Trustees,

Thank you all for your service to the Village.

I am unable to attend the budget hearing in person but I wanted to share my thoughts on the plan to eliminate funding for the CRO program, as it is currently configured in our Village.

I have found the implementation of the CRO program to be a great addition to policing in Mount Kisco and I feel safer in the Village now than at any other time in my 20 years living in Mount Kisco. The CRO has helped me build understanding and trust with my neighbors and together, as neighbors, we benefit from greater trust and understanding with our police. I have heard the comments on the CRO program throughout this budget process, and in the years preceding, and it is clear that the CRO as a discreet position is an essential source of urgently needed services for a significant segment of our community.

I understand that budgeting is difficult and in order to keep tax increases at targeted levels, hard decisions have to be made. I ask that with short time to finalize the budget that the CRO program funding be maintained for this '24-'25 budget. There does not appear to be enough time to ensure that the services provided by the CRO can be provided by other members of the Westchester County Police to the satisfaction of residents, village stakeholders, and involved organizations and service providers.

If the decision to pursue the elimination of the CRO program is ultimately taken, I believe that the community needs for the vital services that a dedicated CRO provides to be seamlessly assured to keep all residents and visitors to the Village safe and positively engaged with our police agency. That would include significant discussions with organizations like Neighbors Link, Northern Westchester Hospital and the Latino Providers Network along with Village residents and other community stakeholders. That process would take significant time and planning; more time than the May1 deadline appears to allow.

Mount Kisco's residents have an admirable level of service and understanding with the Westchester County Police, significantly due to the CRO program, and I hope that we will preserve and defend that benefit which so many other communities so desperately seek.

Best,

Michael McGuirk

103 Grove Street

## Lizette Davis

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**From:** Suzanne Cohen <suzanne\_j\_cohen@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 7, 2024 7:52 AM  
**To:** Village Manager  
**Subject:** Mount Kisco Arts Council Funding

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Board of Trustees:

I am troubled that the Board of Trustees is considering reducing the annual funding to the Mount Kisco Arts Council. I support that the funding remain in place at the current level to allow the MKAC to continue delivering quality programs for our village.

Having attended MKAC programming, I know their work contributes to the vitality and sense of community in our special village. I enjoy the fact that I can walk to high quality programs in Mount Kisco.

MKAC programming provides important access to the arts for our residents of all ages and contributes to the vibrance of our town. Any reduction in funding to MKAC would decrease the positive effect their work has on the quality of life in Mount Kisco

Thank you for this opportunity to share my concerns.

Regards,  
Suzanne Cohen  
35 Stewart Place, #203

## Lizette Davis

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**From:** Michele Beckhardt-Lada <mdlada@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 8, 2024 11:38 AM  
**To:** Village Manager  
**Subject:** Voice for the Arts

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mt. Kisco Government Officials,

In the 24 years that we have lived in Mt. Kisco, nothing has been so exciting as the musical and artistic events that have embraced our lives.

Finally our town was emulating other towns around us that embrace the arts and all it has to give in joy, opening up minds and hearts and resident togetherness.

The music during the summer in front of our town hall and in Leonard Park and festivals helps promote local musicians as well as show case and support, them and others. We eat out afterwards as well as out of towners that come to these venues bringing outside money into our village and awareness of what we offer.

In fact I put forth to further our community with the thought that we too could have a community band or orchestra to enhance our Mt. Kisco residents lives and comradery. And an all encompassing arts and craft show would be another wonderful thing!

Why take or diminish something that has brought so much joy to our lives! Why go back to a community that has less reason to get together and interact with each other in creative ways!

A town known for it's arts is a hub for tourists and tourist money if promoted. This is all a good thing and a wonderful thing for Mt. Kisco residents. Do not cut the budget!

*Sincerely,*

*Michele Beckhardt-Lada and David Lada*

914-262-2697

April 8th, 2024

To the Mount Kisco Village Board of Trustees,

I am writing to express my strong support for maintaining the current level of funding for our Village Arts Council in the upcoming budget deliberations. The Arts Council plays a vital role in our community, enriching our lives and fostering creativity in ways that are both tangible and profound. Events put on by the Arts Council deliver life to our downtown and foster connections with our neighbors. **To cut Mount Kisco Arts Council's limited budget would be a complete blunder, undervaluing its importance to the strength and well-being of our community.**

The programs and events organized by the Arts Council bring our community together, stimulate tourism, and provide invaluable opportunities for artists of all ages to showcase their talents. A positive experience I had with the Arts Council was in 2022 when they hosted my senior internship and aided Fox Lane in producing our first-ever fashion show. This experience was crucial not only for my learning and growth but also for all the students who would otherwise not have the opportunity to showcase their work outside of our school walls. This event was enjoyed by two hundred guests including residents and non-residents of Mount Kisco. The Arts Council hosts countless family-friendly events that create the identity of our local community and build a positive reputation that we are a healthy and happy town that others want to visit and move to.

I urge you to consider the long-term benefits of supporting the Arts Council and to prioritize its funding in the upcoming budget. By cutting the budget once, the Village Board will not be hesitant to cut it again and again. Do not let Mount Kisco become a boring town, robbed of creativity and life. No one wants to live in a town void of spirit and interconnectedness. Let's continue to make our village a vibrant and inspiring place to live for all residents by supporting the operations of the Mount Kisco Arts Council.

Sincerely,  
Olivia Lippolis

107 Willetts Rd  
Mount Kisco, NY 10549  
olivialippolis04@gmail.com  
(914)299-0428



Executive Director  
914-666-3410  
[cbracco@neighborslink.org](mailto:cbracco@neighborslink.org)

April 1, 2024

Mount Kisco Mayor and Village Board of Trustees  
Village/Town of Mount Kisco  
104 East Main Street  
Mount Kisco, NY 10549

Dear Mayor Cindrich and Village Board of Trustees,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Community Resource Officer position in Mount Kisco. At Neighbors Link, we know that our communities are safest when all residents feel comfortable interacting with law enforcement. In Mount Kisco, with more than 30% of the population being foreign born, it is particularly important that members of the immigrant community feel safe coming to police when they are witnesses or victims of a crime. The Community Resource Officer role has been critical in building trust and improving communication between local police and the immigrant community. This has made all residents safer.

We have seen first-hand the powerful impact that this position has had on improving police and community relations, building common ground and developing mutual respect. Please find enclosed some photos that illustrate this impact.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carola Otero Bracco".

Carola Otero Bracco  
Executive Director

## Lizette Davis

---

**From:** laviniawiggins@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 6, 2024 9:39 PM  
**To:** Village Manager  
**Cc:** Lisa Abzun  
**Subject:** Voice for the Arts

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I understand the Mt. Kisco Arts Council budget is under consideration. I can't express how vital it is that the budget not be cut.

With limited areas for creative expression in town, every opportunity that can be taken is important and the funding is critical. It's so lovely to see people sitting in front of the library listening to live music. Local artists being able to show their work at pop up galleries, young artists having a venue to display their creations. This and many more things wouldn't happen without the Arts Council.

Any art or music event brings people into town, and usually they spend money at local businesses as a result. The Arts Council makes that happen. I know you are already aware of how communities benefit by supporting creative endeavors. Please keep the funding in place.

Thank you  
Lavinia Wiggins  
1 Barker St.

**From:** Leslie Weir <leslie.a.weir@gmail.com>

**Date:** March 27, 2024 at 11:11:37 AM EDT

**To:** Edward Brancati <ebrancati@mountkisco.ny.gov>, mayorcindrich@mountkisco.ny.com, Trustee Lisa Abzun <trusteeabzun@mountkisco.ny.gov>, Deputy Mayor Theresa Flora <deputymayorflora@mountkisco.ny.gov>, Trustee Karen Schleimer <trusteeschleimer@mountkisco.ny.gov>, Trustee Angie Guerra <trusteeguerra@mountkisco.ny.gov>

**Cc:** Andrew Weir <weirandrewj@gmail.com>

**Subject:** Community Resource Officer Initiative

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees,

I was taken aback upon learning during last week's budget presentation that the Village intends to discontinue our Community Resource Officer initiative, a commendable program led by Officer Eddie Ramirez. Over the past two years he has built trust and relationships with the Mount Kisco community.

I firmly believe that this decision will hinder the progress made in community-police relations in Mount Kisco, with repercussions extending far beyond what may be anticipated. One relationship that has been fostered and is invaluable is the one he has with Mount Kisco Elementary School. The disruption of this essential program will especially be felt here.

This proposal feels out of line with what our families want in regard to the safety of our children and what school district supports for our school. The budget proposed by the Superintendent of Bedford Central School District to the BCSD Board of Education last week included a suggested financial collaboration with the Village to sustain CRO involvement at MKES.

The importance of nurturing this continuous relationship shouldn't be underestimated. Furthermore, with new school leadership on the horizon, Officer Ramirez's presence offers stability and continuity during the transition.

I urge you to listen to the voices of the community and be in direct communication with school stakeholders and BCSD on your plans before finalizing the budget. It greatly impacts our kids so please take care.

Sincerely,

Leslie Weir  
85 Croton Ave

**From:** JUDITH SAGE <judithellensage@gmail.com>

**Date:** March 30, 2024 at 4:34:10 PM EDT

**To:** Edward Brancati <ebrancati@mountkisco.ny.gov>, J Michael Cindrach <cindrach14@gmail.com>

**Subject: Budget Hearing Public Comment**

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mayor Cindrach and Village Trustees

I am against continuing the CRO Program in the budget for the following reasons:

1. I believe we cannot afford this expense with respect to both salary and overtime.

If however, the CRO officer position is approved **Before** the budget is finalized-The cost for the CRO should at the least be made publicly available, including not just the annual regular cost (which I understood to be \$250,000?), but also a detailed dollar accounting for all overtime including the basis/reason for the overtime approved.

2. I believe all officers should be community officers who are expected to form positive relationships with the community. I believe all officers are role models for kids in our community.

The number of Spanish speaking officers assigned to the Village by the County should roughly equal the percentage of residents for whom Spanish is their native language, so as to enhance communication and trust between the officers and the community.

I know all Westchester County Public Safety Officers receive excellent training in implicit bias, de-escalation; and authorization/use of deadly force. We can expect that any officer assigned to our Village is trained at the highest level of professionalism.

3. I disagree with the argument that there is a need to address "stakeholders" in determining whether or not to continue to fund a CRO officer position.

Every single resident and business owner in Mount Kisco is a stake holder and also a taxpayer when it comes to public safety. A survey should be sent out annually requesting feedback on satisfaction with all Village services, including public safety.

On the other hand, if what is meant by “stakeholders” relates to the previous use of uniformed officers working on the taxpayer dollar sent to pose for a photograph at a local business for a Facebook ad promotion-that’s inappropriate and unethical. No private business should be requesting, or accepting, taxpayer paid uniformed officers to help with ads.

The best events worthy of taxpayer dollars regarding public safety are things like below (which don’t require a CRO):

Installation of child car seats

Meetings with teens regarding DWI, DWAI-drugs; and speeding

Meetings with seniors regarding scams and how to make their homes more secure

Meetings with the business community about how to make their businesses more secure, and how best to prevent retail theft

4. I hope that our County Legislator will show the respect to allow Mount Kisco’s elected officials to make this decision without her interference (representing who?) While I recognize we have County officers, this is OUR public safety contract, and residents should decide how we deploy it.

Obtaining a grant from the County to fund a CRO in Mount Kisco is a sleight of hand for our residents. Yes, it is a way to have some of our County tax dollars returned to us. But even if the County Legislator comes up with some funds to help pay for a CRO, we still pay for it. We pay County taxes too.

5. One reason the CRO was ineffective was that despite his well intentioned efforts and dedication, he was trying to be a substance abuse counselor when he has no certification or training in this field; and also trying to be a mental health counselor when he is not licensed or trained as a mental health provider.

The County Mobile Crisis Team social workers do have these licenses and certifications and are best equipped to handle chronic disease conditions effectively and professionally.

5. There are one town/one school district configurations that can reasonably arrange for a Youth Officer to serve as both a CRO and an SRO (school resource officer). That might be more difficult when multiple Towns and Villages share a school district.

Additionally, SRO’s are often assigned to high schools to address problems like students selling drugs on campus, and students bringing guns on to school property. And also as the first available response to any school public safety threat. So I am confused as to how those tasks could be efficiently deployed. It would be great if they could be. But I have doubts.

—

Finally I want to thank all our amazing Westchester County Public Safety Officers for their service on our behalf.

Judy Sage



Derek Anderson  
Executive Director  
Office # 914-666-1301  
Email: [danderson2@northwell.edu](mailto:danderson2@northwell.edu)

March 29, 2024

Mt. Kisco Mayor and Village Board of Trustees  
Village/Town of Mt. Kisco  
104 E Main Street  
Mount Kisco, NY 10549

Dear Mayor and the Village Board of Trustees,

I am writing today to express my support for the Community Resource Officer position in Mt. Kisco. This role has been an asset to our hospital community in navigating complex cases, fostering positive relationships with community members, and enhancing safety within our hospital and surrounding neighborhoods. The Community Resource Officer's dedication to collaboration, problem-solving, and community engagement is vital to our mission of promoting health and well-being for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Derek D. Anderson".

Derek Anderson  
Executive Director

400 East Main Street, Mount Kisco, NY 10549

-----Original Message-----

From: Lisa Mitchell <lisa\_mitchell@me.com>

Sent: Monday, March 25, 2024 2:17 PM

To: Edward Brancati <ebrancati@mountkisco.ny.gov>; Mayor J. Michael Cindrich <mayorcindrich@mountkisco.ny.gov>; Deputy Mayor Theresa Flora <deputymayorflora@mountkisco.ny.gov>; Trustee Karen Schleimer <trusteeschleimer@mountkisco.ny.gov>; Trustee Lisa Abzun <trusteeabzun@mountkisco.ny.gov>; Trustee Angie Guerra <trusteeaguerra@mountkisco.ny.gov>

Subject: Community Policing Program

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mayor Cindrich, Mr. Brancati, & the Mount Kisco Trustees,

I am disappointed to learn of your plans to abolish the community policing initiative, which has gone miles toward building trust and collaboration between our community and law enforcement. Mount Kisco is an exemplar of community policing, with Officer Ramirez arising as a sought-out expert on community relations across the state.

When Juan Barbecho, Erica Charpentier, and I met with the mayor earlier this year, I was encouraged to hear of plans to continue and potentially expand this program. Additionally, BCSD recently shared its plans to collaborate with the village and community policing program to enhance security at MKES through a cost share of such an officer. As a parent of a MKES student, this news is deeply concerning.

I am not aware of any public discussion by your board over the choice to end this program, and am surprised to hear of the proposal. This will have long-lasting and damaging effects on our community, and I urge you to reconsider. At the very least, for the sake of transparency, it is appropriate to engage residents in a dialogue about canceling this initiative.

Thank you for your time and service to our community.

Sincerely,

Lisa Mitchell

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**From:** Erica Charpentier <erica.charpe@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Monday, March 25, 2024 1:55 PM

**To:** Edward Brancati <ebrancati@mountkisco.ny.gov>; Mayor J. Michael Cindrich <mayorcindrich@mountkisco.ny.gov>; Deputy Mayor Theresa Flora <deputymayorflora@mountkisco.ny.gov>; Trustee Karen Schleimer <trusteeschleimer@mountkisco.ny.gov>; Trustee Lisa Abzun <trusteeabzun@mountkisco.ny.gov>; Trustee Angie Guerra <trusteeaguerra@mountkisco.ny.gov>

**Subject:** Community Resource Officer Program

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Board of Trustees:

I was surprised to learn in last's weeks budget presentation that the Village plans to end our Community Resource Officer initiative, the wonderful community trust-building program through which Officer Eddie Ramirez has been delivering services in Mt Kisco for the past 2 years.

I believe strongly this cut will set Mt Kisco community-police relations back, and that the unintended consequences will be far-reaching. This innovative program is a model for community policing across NYS and the country. Mt Kisco's many community partner organizations recognize the program's value as well - in fact, the Bedford Central School District Superintendent's budget presented to the BCSD Board of Education this past week included a proposed financial partnership with the Village to support CRO engagement at MKES.

I strongly urge you to hear from the community and reconsider this cut before finalizing the budget.

Sincerely,  
Erica Charpentier  
Mount Kisco

Mayor Cindrich: Anyone else? Before we go for round two. I just have one comment, Mr. Brancati, has any member of the Board suggested that the Arts Council be defunded.

Mr. Brancati: No, there was the comment in the work session last week about reducing the number of concerts in the summer concert series, I think that what's being referred to from that work session video, but no, not any cut. We haven't, we didn't discuss any cut to the funding level.

Mayor Cindrich: Is anyone on the board in support of defunding the Arts Council?

Trustee Schleimer, I think what we're hearing is something that people don't appreciate. We have looked into almost all of the committees and councils in this Village and looked at all of their funding. We have tried to talk to the people who run those organizations. I think that the best thing that came out of this discussion, and I really do believe there was no intention to say we're cutting concerts. It was a discussion to look at what it is we're doing. I mean, Chappaqua does five concerts, Armonk does five concerts, other towns do seven concerts. We just need to know, and with all of you who have come to speak tonight, there's nothing better that we could have heard. How wonderful it is that all of our residents heard you speak and heard you talk about all the things that you do that not everyone is aware of, and maybe we're not even all aware of the extent of what you do. So, the truth of the matter is this discussion ended up being a plus in every way humanly possible. We know more. We appreciate more. Jean Farber's discussion of how the Arts Council got started. This is all wonderful news and, I don't think there was ever an intention, it was only a discussion to try to analyze what it was we were doing and whether this was something we wanted to continue. We've heard from a lot of people. We've heard from people who were involved in the Arts Council. I think it's been a discussion so incredibly worth having, even if it came from a misunderstanding of what we were trying to do, because we have looked at the

Economic Development Council, we look at everything and that's what we do during budget time. It wasn't a focus on cutting the Arts Council. It was trying to make sure that we were doing what we thought was what we wanted to do and we've heard great stuff. Truthfully, I'm thrilled. So, thank you all for being here. Thank you all for sharing, and thank you all for speaking up.

Mayor Cindrich: I have a couple of comments and I hope you will appreciate them. When Jean Farber approached me when she was on the board, Jean can testify to what I said, I said, Go for it. When the Recreation Commission came to me and asked if we could do concerts in the park, I said, Great idea. When the Arts Council grew, I had no aversion to keeping it going, but what really bothers me is to suggest, especially for me, for my wife, who started in Mount Kisco Elementary School as a volunteer for non-English speaking Italian-Americans, who is an accomplished floral arranger, an artist, a guitar player who enjoys the arts as much as anybody in this room. When the pandemic struck, she saw a need, a volunteer need to help the people, especially the seniors who were homebound, desperate, and in despair. She volunteered her time, along with no Village resources, except for Felipe recording, to start a televised paint gathering night, to make people feel like their lives were not ending during the pandemic, and this has been going on for three years. So, to suggest, and no funding, never asked for a dime, although people asked, why is your wife doing that? How much is she getting paid? This is the backbiting that goes on in this village. Nothing. She's getting paid nothing. Like many volunteers in this room, she's never asked for a dime. She enjoys helping people, and to suggest that I would say, well, we're going to defund the Arts Council. I'm sorry, I don't ever remember being in that conversation. I know the Arts Council has had difficulty, as we all had and will continue to have with this cycle that's changed with the weather. I know Trustee Abzun has asked that we look for some kind of shelter that we can provide. I suggested certain things, it wasn't what she had in mind, but we're still looking at it, so don't make things up. There are volunteers that give back to the community, altruistic volunteers that ask nothing in return, who give to the community, and consider this, that no one that I recall ever spoke about reducing the funding for the Arts Council and if they had, it probably would have been rejected by me. So that's all I can say on this topic. Mr. Smoller if you want to have an opportunity to speak again, you're welcome to speak. There are no time limits.

Mr. Smoller, Oh, that's great, and kudos to your wife. That's really fantastic. It's such an amazing thing, and I'm sure it brought a lot of comfort to a lot of people during a really horrible time. That's really awesome to hear. So, what I'd love to hear is a commitment from this group to double the Arts Council funding for fiscal year 2024-2025, because we understand what an incredible asset this is to the community. Like Dan mentioned, it brings families in, it brings community together. Let's improve that, let's build a structure, let's make this town a place where people want to come to experience the arts, to eat, to go to our beautiful library. We have so many assets here that we could be sharing more and then encouraging more activity within our town financial activity, artistic activity, dance party activity, whatever. So, apples to oranges. The Arts Council is doing an amazing job. Will you commit to doubling their funding?

Mayor Cindrich, will I commit to double the funding. Yeah. Will you commit to accepting a 12% tax increase?

Mr. Smoller; Yes. Okay.

Mayor Cindrich, next thing is, we can take the hike, take all the funding that is accumulated capital funding out of the budget. Let's have a 12% increase in the budget, and Alex Smoller can say I endorse it.

Mr. Smoller, That's right. I'm a proud sponsor of that. Next thing. Community resource officer. This gentleman told us a lot of details and facts and things and kind of a scary story at the end about getting off a train late at night. I'm not too fond of scary stories when I'm trying to make a point that to me feels a little disingenuous. My understanding is that the community resource officer that we currently have, Eddie Ramirez, Officer Ramirez, his position within this town, that community office resource officer position is being cut. Is that true or not?

Mayor Cindrich, It's under review, and I will say this, the contract, there was no contract. I don't know what the board approved. I'm still very trying to figure out, there was no contract for this community resource officer. It was a \$250,000 adjustment to the original contract. Okay. There's very little in the job description. Very little in what hours worked and it's still under review. The community policing in this village is going to increase. Community policing, we heard mentioned numerous times about the reimagining of police and community policing. Community Resource Officers in the two major cities, New Rochelle and Yonkers, have several community resource officers with 200- or 300-member departments. They serve a function. What we wanted here in Mount Kisco, when I negotiated the original contract were County police officers that were assigned to Mount Kisco, were going to be supervised by supervisors in Mount Kisco, and not part of a specialized unit. At the present time, for example, the Town of Cortlandt has one community resource officer and another hybrid of a community resource officer that is assigned to traffic and pedestrian safety. The Town of Cortlandt is part of, they use a county police contingent. The Town of Cortlandt spends a little over \$1 million in funding the police department. Mount Kisco spends over \$7 million. So, is it unreasonable to ask that we have some organizational control over where, when, and how that officer is working? This is not a referendum on the current officer. There are things which I'm trying to accomplish with the school district to prevent the problems that have occurred nationwide. Personally, knowing a little bit about it, school resource officers in the past have been a dumping ground. The facts, as Chief D'Agostino bears out, we've had many issues in this country where the school resource officer couldn't respond to an assault on children, didn't have the wherewithal, the psychological training, or the psychological clearing before being assigned. That's all changed and we look for community resource officers to be well-trained, have the ability to run towards the danger, and do the community resourcing and function of community policing. Now, every officer in this village should be doing the work of community policing. They should be building a rapport with every child, every middle-aged resident, every senior citizen, anybody that visits the community, and that's my goal. So, I'm not committing right now. This is going to go on until, I believe, the last Monday of April, April 29th. We're going to consider it and continue to gather facts. We're going to be talking to the hierarchy of the Westchester County Police Department. We're going to try to figure out what the board voted on, and I may be speaking out of turn, but the reassignment of the community resource officer program was on the table before I assumed the position of Mayor. Now I've been here since 1971. My wife was born here, neither of us ever felt unsafe. I never felt unsafe in the Village of Mount Kisco. That is a complete distortion of the facts that people feel unsafe without a community resource officer. The fact of the matter is the contract we had, the county police went into effect in 2015, in the spring. We went seven years without a community resource officer. Everybody can have their own opinion, but the facts bear out. Crime was down, response time was down, activities between community members and the police department were increased, the function, I believe the current resource officer was here for a good part of that time. He was doing what he had to do to build community relations, and I have no problem with that. I wouldn't have signed the contract to change the model that we perfected back in 2015, okay, so that's what we're looking at and we're going to continue to look at it. If the school board decides that they want the help of Mount Kisco, which I explained this once, we offered three different, I offered three different scenarios. I remind everybody that there are over 500 children in the elementary school, maybe another hundred with staff. This is the largest gathering outside of the hospital in the village. The money we're spending outside the school at any given time is well worth it, and we'll continue, and hopefully it'll be enhanced. When a person is walking down the street, whether it's South Moger Avenue or Main Street, I want him to encounter every police officer that is in his path or her path with a smile. I don't have to say thank you for your service, just feel comfortable that they're there to protect the people of our community. So, if anybody else that wants to speak you're welcome to. This issue with the Arts Council is not... I find it rather disingenuous when a question is asked how it morphed into the defunding of the Arts Council. So, I'm sorry, that's my feeling. I don't even think I responded to it because I had no interest in any budget cuts in that vein. I could give you a whole host of other budget cuts I would consider, but that's for the next two weeks. We'll decide on that, but I for one, I'd like to live here the rest of my life. I'm not a wealthy person, not a poor person, and I worked hard my whole life. The best thing Mount Kisco has to offer is its people, its volunteers, a significant number of volunteers. I hope that will continue, and I hope we will be able to rebuild our tax base that we've lost, \$5 million in taxable properties in the last five years. Is that a problem? Absolutely. Are we using capital reserves to balance the budget? Both the Treasurer and the Manager will tell you, well, we're not going to use that money, but we're including it in the budget. We're giving the manager a cushion, we're giving the department

heads a cushion, but when you add it up, as for the budgets, look at the amount of capital reserves that have been used in the last five years in the budget exponentially increases the budget every year, and the budget percentage increase is based on that increase. So, you're talking a million and a half this year, a million and a half last year, and maybe for three or four years before that, another 2 million plus. That's not the way I want to see the village grow. I want to see the Village grow with some legitimate development. I want to see the Village grow and increase our tax base, and I want everybody to feel comfortable and safe. Anybody that doesn't feel safe, I'd like an email because I want facts on why you feel unsafe.

Mr. Smoller, a lot of people that feel unsafe may not feel comfortable to step forward, and that's where a community resource officer comes in. So, when this is debated and considered, I think a lot of people in this community would appreciate real consideration for that, to really review what that position has done, and what it could also do in the future, because I think it's a valuable service for this community, particularly because of its makeup. Thank you. That's the end of my questioning. Thank you.

Jessica Colon, hi, I'm Jessica Colon from Mount Kisco. I don't want you to feel that we were disingenuous or that we were attacking you or accusing you of anything, Mayor. I hope that it doesn't take away the fact that we're expressing to you, as you were saying Trustee Karen, that it was important what you heard today. It's important that you guys came out, and I appreciate that, and spoke of the importance of the Arts Council because it is important. We came out here just to discuss, we were nervous, and maybe it was miscommunication, but we were nervous. Oh, my goodness. We're already struggling with the \$10,000. I'm making the calls to try to get, more talented musicians out there, and it's tough to make that call and be like, okay, let me try to figure out the budget. Understand that, we really are struggling and we don't have a home. So, if anything comes out of this, maybe you can help us at least provide a home for the Mount Kisco Arts Council, because we don't have one. So if anything comes out of this, please understand it is important as the public has spoken and we're here asking you, please just help us out, okay?

Mayor Cindrich, You could have come across the street and ...

Ms. Colon, no, I couldn't because this is what this is for, I'm a citizen, and we came this way, right? Okay. So, this is how we do it, and that's one of the things I appreciate. I come here and I listen to all of you speak and I smile and I'm like, this is fantastic. This is the way this community works. So, I'm not going to knock on your door, Mike. I'm going to come here as a citizen, as a taxpayer, and approach all of you so it isn't personal. I don't have anything personal against any of you, if anything, I hope you guys see that I've been here three years and I volunteer and I spend a lot of my time away from my family bringing back to this community. I hope you see that, and that's all I'm saying. Okay. Thank you.

Deputy Mayor Flora, you know, so we got the budget book, Angie and I, who are new Trustees on the Board and I don't know, maybe it was a couple or three days before we had to meet about the budget. So, I took it very seriously. When I got elected, I promised that I would take the job very seriously, work hard, and I would be a good steward of the taxpayer dollars. So, I went page by page, and not just once, because finance is not my forte. I'm a registered nurse by trade and a mom, and those are the only two jobs I know, but I was able to run a household and balance my checkbook and live within my means. I knew the difference between needs and wants, and so, I was the one who brought up the Mount Kisco Arts Council the other night, and it was one of many things. I started off with the Goose Dog, and I wanted someone to explain to me the wisdom, and if it's working, it's not working in the park, but it's working in the downtown. So, it's all a learning process for me, and I was trying to preface each one of my questions with this is not a criticism, I'm just trying to learn. So, I brought it up and I just wanted to know, does the \$10,000 budget include all of the concerts? The answer was yes, and I had some follow up things I just was trying to understand, as was with the Economic Development Council, there was money sitting there and we didn't even know if we had that group anymore. I did want to say this about the Mount Kisco Arts Council. I have said in the past that it has enriched my life. I'm not artsy, but it has enriched my life because it has enriched my youngest daughter's life very much. She was a graduate of Fox Lane, she was in the art program, she was also in the fashion program there. I only knew how to sew

a button on, but by the end of the first term that she took, she was able to create clothing, was part of the art show, and really developed a skill that it was just amazing to me because I cannot use a sewing machine or make clothes. She's almost finished with her second year at School of Visual Arts, and it was largely due to the art program at Fox Lane and largely due to what Trustee Abzun had done there with Ms. Lappin-Burke, which was amazing. So, I have a connection with the Mount Kisco Arts Council. I was merely asking a question. So, I want everybody to understand if I ask a question, I'm not asking the question to say, I want to cut this. I'm asking a question because I feel like I need to learn just so I can learn, and so when people ask me a question, I can answer it, and that's really all it was. Then, Trustee Schleimer asked another question and there was just banter back and forth. Honestly, there was no discussion of cuts because when I got a message on Facebook the next morning, from a person I didn't know, asking me if we were cutting and I was really confused and said I didn't hear that. It was never talked about. So, I can honestly tell you that didn't happen. For me, that was not the reason that I asked the question. I asked a lot of questions. I have a lot of Post-its and two notebooks worth of notes about the budget. I just want you know, I'm taking it seriously and we're trying as hard as we can. So, thank you, and I honestly appreciate everybody speaking because I encourage people, please come and speak at the meeting, even if it's something I'm not going to want to hear, please come and speak. So, thank you.

Jean Farber again, so would now be a good time to ask for an increase? I'm serious. I mean, doubling it would be beautiful, but I don't anticipate that. We've had the same budget of \$10,000 for years, and as we know, prices of everything have gone way up, maybe \$2,500 would be considered, to help keep up with inflation. Please consider that while we have everybody's attention, I thought I'd throw that out. Thank you.

Mayor Cindrich, there's a line out the door of Ed's office. You are welcome to join in the line.

Jean Farber, Okay. I'll talk to Ed later.

Mayor Cindrich, Right, Ralph? Anyone else this evening? Okay. There are a number of letters that just came in this evening that I will try to share. One of the first letters is from, I believe she's an employee of the school district, her name is Deborah Rispoli and she's emailing me. I'm emailing in response to a notice I received from Officer Edwin Ramirez today, who received cover letters and resumes from two of our students to do an internship with him this spring as part of the Aspire program. To my disappointment, Officer Ramirez informed me that there is a very good possibility his position would be eliminated and would no longer be able to support our program. If you're looking for input on this matter, Officer Ramirez has been fantastic with Fox Lane interns providing them with worthwhile experience. The feedback every year has been nothing but great. It would be a huge loss to the community if he no longer was able to participate in the program. I hope this comes in early enough to be part of tonight's discussion. I'm somewhat familiar with what the Aspire program is, and if anybody else has more information on that, you're welcome to join in, but it's an internship open to the entire Fox Lane student body, I believe, who are seniors. It encompasses internships throughout the County, going even into New York City, where executives may take a student from Fox Lane into his office for a few days or week or whatever. The County Police and the County Government have internships, which can be applied for that would be available, not only within the police department, but I believe within probation and within the medical center as in our own hospitals. So, I'll respond. This came in at, I probably got it around 5:00 p.m. when I was at Andre Ferrara's wake. There's another email that came in from Aviva Meyer, who is actually a resident of the Village, but also an employee of Westchester County.

**Lizette Davis**

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**From:** Aviva Meyer <aviva.meyer@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 8, 2024 4:46 PM  
**To:** Mayor J. Michael Cindrich; Trustee Lisa Abzun; Deputy Mayor Theresa Flora; Trustee Angie Guerra; Trustee Karen Schleimer; Village Manager  
**Subject:** Mount Kisco Budget

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Village Mayor and Trustees,

I am unable to attend the budget hearing tonight but wanted to express my thoughts on this year's budget. I'm very disappointed to hear about possibly cutting the Mount Kisco Arts Council's funding. I just read about the retirement of Janet Langsam, the director of ArtsWestchester, and was touched by something she said — why do people have to travel all the way to the city to museums and shows — why can't they have arts at home? The Mount Kisco Arts Council has been exactly that for Mount Kisco residents. MKAC exposes arts to residents who may not have the means to travel to the city or get away in the summer. MKAC provides activities to seniors and young families close to home. MKAC provides venues for local artists, professional and amateur, to show their work and for their friends and neighbors to see it. MKAC partners with Bedford Central Schools to teach and recognize our community's talented young people. A modest amount spent on art yields dividends back to the village. Having arts in the community attracts people to Mount Kisco, to live, increasing real estate values, and to visit, bringing dollars to our local economy.

Unfortunately, artists have been feeling the same inflationary pressures that we all have. Costs of materials and supplies have risen; artists & sound engineers fees have gone up. I will point out the Arts Council is asking for a modest increase in funding, because with inflation in the last years, even keeping the funding flat IS a cut. This applies to the other volunteer led community organizations as well, such as the Historical Society, CAC and others — I'm not involved directly in them, but I recognize the value they bring to Mount Kisco and how all these volunteer organizations work synergistically together to make a great village. It is amazing what a few dedicated volunteers can do to with little funds. But these organizations all need something to be able to capitalize on — I hope you consider the exponential impact of this small investment in the budget.

I do also want to touch on the importance of a Community Resource Officer in the village. It seems to me penny-wise but pound-foolish to cut off a program that has barely begun, but made great strides in the short time that the officer has been in the community. I also worry at the apparent conflating of two new programs, assuming the Mobile Crisis Response Team will take care of what the CRO does; they address two different challenges and are not the same. The presence of a CRO is to give a friendly, safe way for the community, particularly the most vulnerable, to interact with police, rather than all interactions only being of a punitive nature. The MCRTs are there to address situations where a mental health response is more appropriate than a law enforcement response, and to do it with mental health professionals rather than police. The CRO and MCRTs can (and have) work together in the community. But they are two different tools, both of which were recommended in the County's Police Reimagining Task Force.

I will also point out that the most vulnerable community, which our CRO has done a great job of reaching out to, is not likely to come to a board meeting or write a letter to the board expound on the benefits. But part of the community resource officer's job is to make reports to the board and has been a successful connection between the community, the police and the government. Please consider keeping this valuable resource.

Thank you for listening.

Aviva Meyer

227 Grove St.

Mayor Cindrich, I'm sure she talks about other groups, including the Historical Society, the Conservation Advisory Council. I'm involved directly with them, and she recognizes the value of volunteerism and organizations working together to make this village great. Then after speaking of that, the talk of cutting this out of the budget, I guess things just spin out of control. Then she wants to touch on the community resource officer and us conflating the two programs, assuming the mobile crisis response team will take care of what the community resource officer does. Nobody's ever making that assumption. The Mobile Crisis Resource Team provides a vital service, is well-funded, and one of the suggestions I recently made about 50% of their calls at the team based in Mount Kisco. I have to bring this up as part of her letter because Aviva Myers is a county employee and she's involved in making these decisions, I believe not sure, but the Mobile Crisis Response Team is based in Mount Kisco. I complimented Ed Brancati for finding housing for them within our former police station headquarters, about 49% of their calls are initiated in the Village of Mount Kisco, but I'm not even sure of that, I'm saying in Mount Kisco. As each and every one of you in the room know that people confuse being a resident of Mount Kisco and a resident of the 10549 zip code. So, we don't have a clear understanding of where the calls are. The original calls for the past couple of years was about 60 or 70 initial calls. The real effort is that they're not abandoning the people that are calling that may be in crisis. They're following up on it, and the follow up calls that they're initiating, there's a dramatic number and it shows how this service, provided free of charge with the County support and funded by the County, is very important to Mount Kisco. So, I'm the last person to confuse what the community resource officer and how they should interact with the Mobile Crisis Response Team. One piece of information I was looking for is we've had a number of incidents over the last two years of people that, in my opinion, were or are in crisis, and that crisis involves substance abuse, alcoholism, and despair, despair from being homeless. These are mental health issues where the mobile crisis response team should be responding, and what I'm looking for, because we haven't witnessed it, at least I haven't, anybody on the board can speak to this, are they initiated by the police officer? The police officer that responds, and it's not only the community resource officer, the police officer that responds to somebody intoxicated on the street performing acts that are socially unacceptable in Leonard Park, drinking in Leonard Park, drinking in Kirby Plaza, are the police using the resources and labeling this as a person in crisis? What they call an EDP in police lingo, an emotionally disturbed person? Are they asking for the mobile crisis response team to act, to get involved, to initiate an intervention? That's part of the information we're looking for, and the training of each and every police officer is part of the community resource officers' job description. So, should he be doing so? Should he be doing training? The officers assigned not only to Mount Kisco, but probably bringing more people into Mount Kisco to be trained. So, in closing Aviva writes, I will also point out that the most vulnerable community, which our community resource officer has done a great job of reaching out to, is not likely to come and they're not likely to come to a board meeting or write a letter or expound on the benefits. Part of the Community Resource Officer's job is to make reports to the board and has been a successful connection between the community, the police, and the government. Please consider the valuable resource and I want to make sure that all of the letters that come in pro or con are read.

So, Michael McGurk, who is a Co-Chair of the Mount Kisco Planning Board, again, he says he's unable to attend the public hearing.

Dear Mayor Cindrich and Trustees,

Thank you all for your service to the Village.

I am unable to attend the budget hearing in person but I wanted to share my thoughts on the plan to eliminate funding for the CRO program, as it is currently configured in our Village.

I have found the implementation of the CRO program to be a great addition to policing in Mount Kisco and I feel safer in the Village now than at any other time in my 20 years living in Mount Kisco. The CRO has helped me build understanding and trust with my neighbors and together, as neighbors, we benefit from greater trust and understanding with our police. I have heard the comments on the CRO program throughout this budget process, and in the years preceding, and it is clear that the CRO as a discreet position is an essential source of urgently needed services for a significant segment of our community.

I understand that budgeting is difficult and in order to keep tax increases at targeted levels, hard decisions have to be made. I ask that with short time to finalize the budget that the CRO program funding be maintained for this '24-'25 budget. There does not appear to be enough time to ensure that the services provided by the CRO can be provided by other members of the Westchester County Police to the satisfaction of residents, village stakeholders, and involved organizations and service providers.

If the decision to pursue the elimination of the CRO program is ultimately taken, I believe that the community needs for the vital services that a dedicated CRO provides to be seamlessly assured to keep all residents and visitors to the Village safe and positively engaged with our police agency. That would include significant discussions with organizations like Neighbors Link, Northern Westchester Hospital and the Latino Providers Network along with Village residents and other community stakeholders. That process would take significant time and planning; more time than the May1 deadline appears to allow.

Mount Kisco's residents have an admirable level of service and understanding with the Westchester County Police, significantly due to the CRO program, and I hope that we will preserve and defend that benefit which so many other communities so desperately seek.

Best,

Michael McGuirk

103 Grove Street

Mayor Cindrich, what he's asking for is that we continue the funding for 2025 and consider changing the model for the following taxable years. Well, he indicates it's going to take too long and the County and the Village of Mount Kisco will not have the ability to act in the next month to make sure that the community policing model is available to the residents of Mount Kisco. The fact is that in the police academy there's a segment, a training block about community policing. This started with the repurposing of the police back in 2021. Community policing, in my opinion, in some of the more progressive communities like the community I worked in, we had community resource officers before we had the acronym CROs. At my job, we had a youth officer that visited the four schools that came under my command, two middle schools, a public elementary school, and also a Catholic K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade school. The people in that community didn't want a uniformed officer at that time. I don't know what it is today in the school, but they were extremely comfortable with a youth officer who holds a position as detective interacting with the children. In my opinion, and the opinion of the Juvenile Officers Association, this individual, and many like him, did an excellent job without increased funding. He not only took care of the schools, but he took care of children that happened to fall on the other side of the law that had to be taken to family court or be taken, occasionally, to a criminal court. He worked with the parents and it was very successful, as was ours before the acronym of MCRT, Mobile Crisis Response Team. As a hostage negotiator, I responded to numerous incidents where parents were fighting with each other, parents were fighting with their children, parents were fighting with their neighbors over their children. Oftentimes when we had barricade situations with teenagers, especially fighting with their parents, the intervention happened under my command using the resources of St. Vincent's Hospital, who I had a rapport with, and they would respond to the scene and, if warranted, a professional trained in that field would make a command decision for voluntary commitment and sometimes involuntary commitment based on the need and the welfare of the child in mind. So, this is what we're up against. We're going to be talking about this for the next two weeks. We're going to take a pause for the Passover holiday, maybe have one

meeting that week, I'm not sure. But right now, I'm going to ask to adjourn the public hearing and I'd consider holding it open until the 15th of April. For any more written comment or facts.

Trustee Abzun, I have two comments that I'd just like to put on the record. Please make sure that Ms. Meyer, in her letter, was not writing as an employee or representative of Westchester County. The Mayor has interjected that, but she is writing as a resident of the Village/Town of Mount Kisco. Mr. McGuirk, similarly, was not writing his letter as a representative of the Planning Board, but as a resident of Mount Kisco living on Grove Street. I wanted the record to reflect that he did not write as a Planning Board Co-Chair, that was interjected by the Mayor. Furthermore, since 2019, I believe that police no longer refer to subjects as EDPs, but those calls are now known as mental health calls, and I wanted that to be reflected. Thank you.

Mayor Cindrich, Thank you.

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Flora and was seconded by Trustee Guerra to close the public hearing; all in favor:

Motion Adopted

Mayor J. Michael Cindrich	Aye
Trustee Theresa Flora	Aye
Trustee Lisa C. Abzun	Aye
Trustee Angie Guerra	Aye
Trustee Karen B. Schleimer	Aye

There being no further business to come before the Board, Mayor Cindrich closed the regular meeting at 8:20 p.m.

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Edward W. Brancati  
Village Manager

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