

GEORGETOWN

# Democrats deliver the taxes

**Lonnie Brennan**  
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Democratic politicians in Massachusetts are not-surprisingly predictable. When the chips are down, you can always count on these pillars of society to throw their communities and constituents under the bus. Sure enough, it happened again. Andover, Methuen, Haverhill... are you listening? It's time to grab onto your ankles. You're about to go for a ride.

How does it feel to be a border town or near-border town, and have the now notorious 'Barbara and Clyde' of the Merrimack Valley (Democrat State Representatives Barbara "Taxes" L'Italien and Barry "Clyde Feel-Good" Fiengold) stick it to you yet again?

This time, it's a mere 25% sales tax increase. And, after all, they HAD to vote for it. It's for the children of course. The children of the MBTA workers I might add whose parents will now have to suffer it out, working until they are at least 55 years of age, with a minimum of 2 more years on the job (going from 23 years to 25 years) before they can collect a taxpayer funded retirement, for the rest of their lives. Two more years...that's what Massachusetts Democrats are calling 'pension reform.'

So, if you're reading this paper in one of the best donut shops around (Heavenly Donuts in Methuen), or one of the best bacon and egg omelet shops (Theo's in Georgetown), or perhaps enjoying a phenomenal Sal's Pizza (Haverhill), or anyplace else in the Merrimack Valley, thanks to Barbara & Clyde, you're also paying a 25% tax increase on your meal! That's right; the cost of coffee just went up, along with burgers, fries, ice-cream... and all just in time for summer! Barbara & Clyde, you've done it again.

It's the Merrimack Valley Democratic way: stick it to Methuen. Cripple Haverhill. Push the sales out of panoramic downtown Andover. Way to go Democrats!

The New Republican Party? The Future for Disgruntled Democrats?

The Republican Party in Massachusetts has been in shambles. With less than a couple of dozen Republicans in the gold-dome State House, the Democratic ma-

chine has crushed any real reform as they continue to excuse-away corruption and tax increases. Ignoring for the moment the limitations of the BostonGOP (more commonly known as the MassGOP), the real hope for change is coming from an unlikely place: Methuen, Haverhill, and Andover Democrats!

It's beginning. Cracks are showing. Some people are realizing they've been had! Raises for government workers on all levels, fueled by more dollars squeezed out of every consumer purchase. I've got two resources for you: the Massachusetts Republican Assembly (MRA: www.mass-republican-assembly.com) and The New Media Summit (brainchild of local political activist Vincent Erichetti). Never heard of either? You shall.

The MRA is making an incredible resurgence after years of invisibility. They're the 'right wing' of the Republican Party. This group believes in reasonable fiscal constraint (conservatism, not endless tax increases). And they have members (and new members such as myself) who support our local pregnancy care center (do what we can to help support mothers-to-be as they prepare to care for their newborns in Haverhill). Quite simply, they're a stark contrast to the go-along-get-along whatever-goes tax/spending Barbara & Clyde's ('Taxes' L'Italien and 'Clyde Feel-Good' Fiengold) of Massachusetts. More on the MRA later. Check out their web site.

The New Media Summit unfolded with an explosion of enthusiasm that continues to reverberate through the internet blogs and channels of all things Republican in Massachusetts. The event, the brainchild of local political consultant Vincent Erichetti strapped a rocket onto the stale, predictable, and previously sinking Republican media efforts, providing a series of training and information sharing seminars. His first-of-its kind event featured appearances by WTTK talk show host Michael Graham, State Representatives Jeff Perry, Karyn Polito, and many more. Not surprisingly, you wouldn't see any Representatives from the Merrimack Valley at the event...they're too busy raising taxes and urging us to shop in New

**BRENNAN, page26**

HAVERTHILL

# A half a million dollars spent on the river and not a drop to drink.

**Jim Donahue**  
HAVERTHILL

A half a million dollars spent on the river and not a drop to drink. I was right on the Merrimack river issue and pointed out the wasteful spending by the Fiorentini administration in regards to tapping the river for drinking water. Cities such as Lawrence, Methuen, and Lowell do use the river as a drinking water source, but Haverhill is downstream from these cities, and their waste-water plants. We are the last city (clarify --not considering towns) on the Merrimack river before the ocean. Haverhill must be concerned with unregulated contaminants such as endocrine disruptors (EDCs), pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCPs) Haverhill is more prone to these harmful pollutants considering our place on the map.

We now know that the administration spent at least a half-million dollars just to study the proposal to use the river for drinking water and the tests came back

less than desirable. The administration's spending habits on studying the Merrimack River was a mistake. The rate-payers are the one's who will suffer unless this administration officailly suspends all further test activity pertaining to the river.

I stood up for what I beleived in got censured for blogging about the river but feel at the end of the day speaking up was the right thing to do for the citizens of Haverhill. The editorial writers from both the Haverhill Gazette and Tribune can call me a lame duck, lone wolf or grandstander like they did in last weeks paper but they can never call me a political hack.



Jim Donahue is a Haverhill City Councilor who is not seeking re-election. He is a 36 year-old history teacher at the Whittier Regional Technical High School and is a conservative, Pro-life Democrat who is for traditional marriage. E-mail him at [jdonahue2020@yahoo.com](mailto:jdonahue2020@yahoo.com).

BOXFORD

# Where are the Playing Fields?

**John McCormack**  
VALLEY PATRIOT BOXFORDCOLUMNIST

The Town of Boxford has reportedly issued a Request for Proposal for a 20-unit "affordable" housing development on the Haynes land. "Affordable" is a term of art for a price-controlled political camel created by the Massachusetts Legislature and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

You have to prove you're poor enough to buy these units, but at a targeted income range of \$80,000 to \$108,000, it would be a pretty plush neighborhood. The Haynes land was purchased with Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds and an allowed use of the land is so-called community housing for low and moderate income families. Low and moderate income are defined as 80% and 100%, respectively, of area-wide median income as defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Boxford is in HUD's Lawrence Metro FMR Area where median family income is \$84,800, making the income range \$67,840 to \$84,800. Perhaps the Orwellian Housing Partnership Committee can resolve this at its upcoming public forum.

That \$108,000 income finds a \$440,000 home affordable at principal, interest, and taxes (PIT) of 30% of income and 10% down; an \$80,000 income swings a \$330,000 home. The Lawrence Metro FMR Area median asking price of 1369 MLS listings is \$329,900; 65% are below \$440,000. Nothing here suggests shortages or any need for taxpayer subsidies.

The Town of Boxford purchased the Haynes land nearly two years ago for \$3.3 million for conservation, recreational fields, and community housing. I vigorously opposed this purchase, believing that the land was the less desirable portion of a larger parcel and contained extensive hills, wetlands and their buffers, a pond, a seasonal stream and possibly endangered species. Two hours with a magic marker revealed the small fraction of usable land. In what felt like a land rush atmosphere, the purchase went ahead anyway.

The purchase price could only be justified by assuming the entire larger parcel would be extensively developed and that the Town, in its sovereign power, was seizing the portion of land it wanted and the land owner would receive damages equal to the value of the larger parcel minus the value of the owner's remainder. This is called "friendly eminent domain" and the damages are much larger than the value by itself of the land taken. The logic of the "friendly" taking was undercut by the Town's agreement with the owner restricting future land use.

The Town formed the Haynes Land Committee which produced a plan greatly

resembling my two hour drawing after a year of kibitzing. Most of the land would be conserved, the State would have to decide which additional areas would be preserved as potential habitat of the endangered Blanding's turtle (which may have been resolved now), the few playing fields planned encroached on wetland buffers and might require variances from an unwilling Conservation Commission, and 13 of the presumably best acres could be given away for subsidized housing.

The Haynes project is a 40B. If 10% of a town's housing units are not "affordable" a developer can apply under Chapter 40B for a comprehensive permit which overrides many local zoning regulations, most notably density, as long as 25% of the units are "affordable" loss leaders. Profits may come from land purchased for the legally permitted use. Profits were high during a real estate asset bubble that grew for ten years from 1997, when unit sale prices could greatly exceed construction cost. Market rate buyers must pay \$475,000 for a \$400,000 unit so that 25% of the buyers can pay \$175,000. The market rate buyer may not realize that he has given \$75,000 to another purchaser even when the bubble pops and he is under water.

That gift comes from taxpayers when towns build "affordable" housing especially if mortgage rates rise. Boxford's bureaucrats want to make every unit "affordable" but this would cost millions for the 268 units needed. Only 5 of 20 Haynes units are "affordable." At what cost? Meeting Boxford's quota this way takes 402 "affordable" units plus 1,206 market rate units, totaling 1,608 units or a 62% housing stock growth!

None of this is necessary. When 40B passed in 1969 the median house cost twice median family income, it rose to three times by 1997, still reasonable, and to five times by 2007, fueled by absurd mortgage products and a deranged "affordable housing" federal bureaucracy. It is now rapidly returning to three times income. This statistic accounts neither for retirees nor for the large number of homes bought with large down payments by people with high current home equity. Many people live in homes unaffordable on their current income and it doesn't signal a housing crisis.

The Haynes project sounds like a developer 40B with the taxpayer on the hook. There should be a good fight over it.



John is a Boxford resident and was vice president of Lattice Trading and Batterymarch Financial Management. You can email him at [jmacprime@yahoo.com](mailto:jmacprime@yahoo.com)

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## CONGRESS IN YOUR CORNER!

## Pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) budgeting is a responsible way to spend the taxpayers mon-

A recent report by the Congressional Budget Office concluded that our national deficit—the difference between what we take in and what we spend every year—will rise by almost \$10 trillion over the next decade, and our national debt—the accumulation of yearly deficits—will reach a staggering \$23 trillion during that same time period.

While some of this dramatic increase can be attributed to declining revenues as a result of the recent economic downturn, it exposes the need to implement real reform in the way the Congress spends money.

No one was more passionate about the dangers of an exploding national debt than my late husband, Senator Paul Tsongas, who made it a central focus of his 1992 campaign for president.

Seventeen years ago, he called for fiscally responsible leadership in Washington. During the Clinton administration, sound fiscal policy prevailed and the debt clock started to roll back.

Since then, we have seen a stark reversal of that success with spending on two wars, tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, and a massive new entitlement program for prescription drugs—none of which was paid for.

The result was that between 2001 and 2009, we spent our surplus and kept on spending until we were deep into debt.

Our projected budget surpluses of \$5.6 trillion over 10 years reversed to projected budget deficits of \$5.8 trillion.

As a member of the Budget Committee, I was proud to co-sponsor legislation from President Obama this week that would reinstate as law the requirement that any tax cut or increase in mandatory spending (such as for new government entitlement programs like health care reform) be offset elsewhere in the budget, either by cuts in spending or increases in revenue. This is known as the pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) rule. PAYGO is not an untested theory. During the 1990s, PAYGO was the law of the land and it paved the way for balanced budgets and responsible government.

In 2002, the Republican-led Congress allowed the PAYGO rule to lapse. They had discovered that it was far easier to cut taxes, increase spending, and hope that the day of reckoning never comes. But that day has come. After years of explo-



sive budget deficits, the interest alone that we paid in fiscal year 2008 was \$249 billion.

That is \$249 billion that could have gone to improving our nation's schools, infrastructure,

or transportation, or spurring clean energy and economic development. Instead it went to our creditors, many of them foreign countries unfriendly to the United States.

Because of our refusal to pay-as-we-went even during periods of growth in the last eight years, each American's share of the debt is now \$37,248 and rising.

This acts as a "birth" tax on every newborn American, a terrible burden that we have bequeathed to future generations. The consensus among economists is that while some deficit spending in the form of the stimulus we passed this spring is necessary to pull us out of the current recession, continued deficit spending is unsustainable over the long run. As we tackle two of the most important issues of

our time, energy and healthcare reform, it is critical that we enact PAYGO rules to signal to our creditors that we are finally serious about paying for what we do.

The President's proposal isn't perfect. Assessing political realities, it exempts from the rules an extension of four current policies: the alternative minimum tax will not be allowed to hit millions of American families that it was never intended to hit, the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts will be extended for middle class families, the estate and gift taxes will be maintained at their 2009 levels, and adjustments to the Medicare reimbursement to physicians will not be reduced.

Through the Budget Committee I will work to improve this legislation, but I recognize that an imperfect PAYGO rule is far better than no rule at all.

PAYGO will not be a panacea, but it will be a necessary first step. Paying-as-you-go requires Congress to make tough choices, but these types of choices are ones that families and households must make every day.

It's past time that Congress be held to the same standard. Rhetoric should be mirrored by laws that mandate its execution. I have co-sponsored PAYGO legislation to do just that and will be urging my colleagues to support its adoption.

## Lowell's FY2010 Budget Drama Continues

Joseph Mendonca

VALLEY PATRIOT LOWELL CONTRIBUTOR

On June 16th the City Council began deliberations on the FY 2010 Budget presented by the city manager. The city manager's proposal included a reduction of 118 City jobs. There were only 48 involuntary lay-offs. The other job reductions were achieved by the City Manager's implementation of a hiring freeze early in the current fiscal year. The number jobs reduced through attrition was 51 – including 16 police officers and 6 firefighters. Although there were no layoffs in Public Safety, there were reductions through attrition. An additional 9 vacancies were created by employees that accepted a \$5,000 incentive to retire or voluntarily terminate their service to the city in FY2009. There were also 8 employees that volunteered to be laid off.

After 6 long hours of reviewing the budget department by department, the Council made only ONE cut – the Assistant to the City Manager's salary of \$85,072 – effectively firing the Assistant. This was done on a 6-3 vote on a motion by Councilor Alan Kazanjian and supported by Councilors Rodney Elliott, Michael Lenzi, Armand Mercier, Rita Mercier, and

Mayor Bud Caulfield. The motion was opposed by Councilors Kevin Broderick, William Martin, and James Milinazzo. Councilor Milinazzo changed his vote to support the cut in order to request reconsideration at the next council meeting.

Many in the community feel that this move is intended to undermine the city manager's ability to succeed and violates the Managers authority. This has the potential to be a major issue in the upcoming city elections. Time will tell.

The motion to reconsider was brought forward at the June 23rd Council meeting. In making the motion, Councilor Milinazzo stated that the Council was "dangerously close to violating" Mass General Laws Chapter 43, Section 107. Section 107 states in part that "Neither the city council nor any of its committees or members shall direct or request the appointment of any person to, or his removal from, office by the city manager or any of his subordinates, or in any manner take part in the appointment or removal of officers and employees in that portion of the service of said city for whose administration the city manager is responsible." The motion to reconsider was defeated by the same 3-6 split. The question that remains and

will likely linger for some time is: will someone file a complaint requesting the enforcement of MGL Chapter 43, Section 107 and will an investigation ensue?

The FY2010 Budget was then approved with a bottom line of \$282,570,009 (includes enterprise funds for the coming year and the snow & ice removal deficit from this past winter). Jobs on the City's side of the budget were reduced by 119.

There are still a couple potential problems in the budget that will have to be resolved before the end of this calendar year. First, the budget relies on the Council adopting the local option 0.75% meals tax. This must be done before September 1st in order to take affect on October 1st. The local meals tax is budgeted to produce \$448,452 revenue in FY2010. If the meals tax is not adopted, approximately 12 additional jobs may have to be cut from the budget. Each month that goes by, beginning in July, could require and additional job to be cut to bring the budget back into balance.

Secondly, the budget funds 26 police officer positions for only half the year. This is a result of the reduction in funding previously provided by the Quinn bill. The hope is that replacement funding can be found to fund these 26 positions for the other half of the fiscal year. If funding is not found, then these 26 positions will also be cut.

In a worst case scenario, the FY2010 budget could result the loss of as many as 160 City jobs (by my analysis). This count (and the 119 above) does not include the School Department's personnel cuts.

The bulk of the pain being felt by cities and town is the result of the State's reliance on local aid cuts to balance the State's budget. The State budget was reduced by 3% from the FY09 Budget. Yet Lowell's FY2010 local aid was reduced by approximately 9% according to the City's FY2010 Budget Proposal.

The State Legislature has placed the municipalities in a position of virtually having to adopt the local 0.75% meals tax to avoid more lay-offs. Once adopted, it will likely become yet another permanent tax for a temporary shortfall. At the moment it is unclear if there is enough support on the Council to adopt the local meals tax. The Council is left with the equally unpalatable alternatives of adding another tax or laying-off more workers.

Which will it be?



Joe is a former Lowell School Committeeman (1999 - 2006) and former Lowell City Councillor (2007) who is familiar with Lowell's City and School Department Budgets.

## BRENNAN: From page 23

Hampshire this summer!

Turning to Georgetown

A few quick tidbits: When I served on the Board of Selectmen, I was honored to join my colleagues in unanimously voting to appoint firefighter Chris Dubois to serve a term on the Georgetown Board of Fire Engineers. A long-time volunteer firefighter with incredible dedication and professionalism, the young Mr. Dubois worked tirelessly. Recently, I'm told he dedicated his own time and money to complete an intensive firefighting program with the State, reportedly finishing in the top of his class at the Academy. As we learn more about this dedicated individual,

I'll be sure to get it posted here.

On a final note, it's good to see Georgetown will finally see a change in administration in the Selectman's office with the recent departure of the Town Administrator. Things are looking up. Enjoy the summer!



Lawrence "Lonnie" Brennan is a former Georgetown Selectman and is currently Vice-Chair of the Georgetown Republican Town Committee. He can be reached at [Lonnie.Brennan@verizon.net](mailto:Lonnie.Brennan@verizon.net).



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