

**GEORGETOWN TODAY!**

**Override will cost you \$60 to \$110/month**

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VALLEY PATRIOT GEORGETOWN COLUMNIST

A few folks were chatting the other day about the upcoming tax increase for the schools, when my friend Tim cut through the air and simply stated "start saving." His words cut right to the core. It's a done deal he thinks.

There's "too many of them, and they want it bad," Tim explained. "(George) Moker and the gang have been giving away money for years. Double-digit raises when we're all hurting out here, and they lie, telling us it's a 3% raise, but then you see the published take-home pay and they're getting 12% raises because of some stupid calculations for years in the job, I'm telling you, this time, save your money. You'll need it. It's gonna cost \$60 each month for me, and Jim, with your home, you'll be paying \$110 or more. Each month!"

It got me thinking. Now, everyone knows I like Mr. Moker. Heck I always have. A good guy who historically has loved to give away raises. He almost got clipped last year, but fortunately, Obama-dollars bailed out the school system and paid off hundreds of thousands in raises. But even Mr. Obama can't keep printing money, so the choice is now before us: continue to pay for the raises, or cut salaries, or positions. I can hear the screaming now: the sky will be falling.

Supt. of Schools Carol Jacobs is currently forming a 'Public Relations Committee' to explain to the approximately 10,000 residents of Georgetown why we need to each pay the schools an addition \$60 to \$110 per month on our tax bills to support a 'tax override.'

Remember: it's for the children we'll be reminded. So, take Tim's advice and start saving. You'll need the money come tax time, and, as this \$1.4 million or so increase becomes part of the 'base' moving forward, in just a handful of years, the multiplication on this 'base' number will cause some to be paying a projected 25% more in taxes than they are paying today. Save up.

Oh, and Tim also noted that we should keep in mind, retirements of older workers won't help, as most teachers and administrators will continue to receive 60 to 80% of their pay, for the rest of their lives when they retire. At the risk of sounding cruel, he asked us "what will your retirement plan be paying you when you retire at 65? 80%, 50%, 40%, 20%, 10%, nutting?" Tim's a sharp guy.

I figured this was worth posting as a survey on [www.GeorgetownToday.com](http://www.GeorgetownToday.com).

1. I believe a reasonable raise for govt. employees for 2011 is: (a) average 10%, (b) average 5%, (c) average 2%, (d) average 1%, (e) 0%. People are hurting out here. Give us a break this year.

2. I believe it is O.K. to increase raises in Georgetown by: (a) \$1 million, same as in 2009, (b) \$500k, (c) \$250K, (d) \$0 Let's freeze it for a year. People are hurting.

3. I believe I pay: (a) Way too little in taxes., (b) An O.K. amount on taxes, (c) I work 5-6 months paying taxes. TOO MUCH.

4. The superintendent of schools at Masconomet took home \$45K less than the supt. of schools in Georgetown in 2009: (a) Makes sense. We're small, but expensive., (b) Hmm, wonder if size matters?, (c) How horrible! She should at least match our supt's \$185K earnings in 2009, (d) What's wrong with this world?

5. When the schools run out of their million+ Obama dollars, I think we should: (a) Raise taxes by at least \$1.6 million for the schools, (b) Raise taxes by at least \$1.2 million for the schools., (c) Go for the biggest tax override we can get, (d) Make folks go without raises for 2 years! Stop the high increases, just vote down the budget at Town Meeting. We can't pay what we don't have.



Lonnie Brennan is a former Georgetown Selectmen and current Clerk for the 1854 -established Erie Fire Association No. 4. He can be reached at [Lonnie@justlonnie.com](mailto:Lonnie@justlonnie.com).



**MOVING HAVERHILL FORWARD**

with Mayor Jim Fiorentini

**New Policy to Waive Interest on Overdue Water Bills Next to Last City Union Joins Mayor's New Health Plan**

Haverhill Mayor James J. Fiorentini has signed a plan into effect abating interest penalties for ratepayers on late water bills through January 31, 2011.

The Mayor proposed to the City Council that he have authority to waive interest on the latest round of water bills, and the Council approved the policy last evening by a vote of 9-0. The Mayor also announced plans to check accuracy of water billing procedures.

"I know that some ratepayers are struggling to pay this most recent round of bills," said Mayor Fiorentini.

As a result of this year's hot summer, water usage spiked across the City. Higher usage meant, for many citizens, higher bills and some residents have expressed concerns. To meet these concerns, the Mayor instituted a policy of allowing customers who have a hardship ninety (90) days interest-free to pay their most recent bill. The Mayor has also instituted a policy of bringing in an outside company to check water meters to make certain that the readings are accurate.

"I understand that people are hurting. Therefore the city is waiving interest that is normally assessed on late bills for up to 90 days so residents can get back on their feet," explained Mayor Fiorentini.

Implementation of a 90-day grace period for water ratepayers who are suffering a financial hardship paying their bills, effective from November 1, 2010 through January 31, 2011. People who have a hardship paying the bills will be able to pay them interest-free until January 31,

2011. At that point, back interest will accrue on the unpaid bill or its remainder, as per usual departmental policy.

The Mayor is also instituting policies to make certain that the bills are accurate and that the public has confidence in the billing procedures. These measures include:

- \* Hiring of an outside company to independently test, verify and spot-check water meters and water/wastewater bills to make certain that these bills are accurate;

- \* Hiring of a separate outside company to verify the accuracy of the city's water billing software system;

"I urge anyone with a water bill problem to call the Water Department and they will review usage with our customers," explained the Mayor. "I want to ensure that all ratepayers are being properly and fairly billed."

If water and wastewater ratepayers have questions, they can contact the Water Billing office at 978-374-2370.

**City union joins mayor's new health plan**

Mayor Fiorentini has also announced that the City Hall Clerks' Teamsters Union has become the latest City Hall union to sign an agreement with the City to join the new health care plan proposed by the Mayor.

The clerks' unit, consisting of 23 members, is the latest union to join the new health care plan proposed by the

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