

Dear Editor,

April 8, 2010

Last year the council presented a zero mil change budget and the budget referendum passed with my objection. This year the proposed budget has a 0.96 mil increase, which is a 4.2% tax increase. Is this acceptable? Let me know. Your chance to share your thoughts is next week at the annual town budget hearing, 7 p.m., Tuesday, April 13, 2010 at McGee Middle School Auditorium, 899 Norton Road.

How can you prepare for the budget hearing? As many of you may know I dig into the details and this year's budget is no different. For those who have similar interests as me, I have made available on the BerlinGOP.com website, a spreadsheet of the past 5 years of actual expenses along with this year's proposed budget so you can see where the council worked on the town manager's proposed budget to come up with the amounts you should see at the hearing. The town will be providing official documents at some point. In your paper last week Mr. Kobus asked for the detailed costs for the high school renovation (available on the town website under Departments & Officials -> Public Works -> Berlin High School Code Renovation 2010-2 -> Option #2 BHS Cost Estimate) this week I am providing detailed visibility to how much of your tax dollars may be spent this coming year.

Here are some highlights for you to consider sharing your thoughts on at the hearing. I lumped them together by whether they tended to raise or lower your taxes.

#### Tend to raise our taxes

A lower anticipated collection rate of 98% compared to 98.7% (as of the end of December 2009 the rate was 98.27% or short \$868,192 in this year's current budget). The school operational budget is up \$696,466 of which \$301,164 is in anticipation of increased tuition costs for magnet school and special education placements and \$207,059 is due to increases in administrative, non-certified, and some areas of certified salaries. Town side pension increases from contractual pay raises and last year's town side pension concessions not offered this year results in an increase of \$289,269. The cost of taking on more debt than we had last year is up \$288,307 this includes \$52,000 for the Petow property, if approved, for a new high school and \$20,000 in interest to start a high school renovation project. I have estimated for my own taxes that besides this year's possible \$200 increase this high school project alone could cause my taxes to go up another \$200 per year in future years. Interest on investment income is down \$140,000. Police payroll is up \$136,702. Insurance is up \$93,131. Replace the town hall chiller (many years past its' design life) and phone system by paying 20% and 1.5% interest this year on \$307,000 or an increase of \$66,005. Touted as a potential revenue source for the golf course, GPS on new 5-year golf cart lease will cost an additional \$25,000 a year.

#### Tend to lower our taxes

1.4% grand list increase. Certified teacher's first year of a three year contract has no step increases or pay raises. Reducing the school operating budget by \$170,000. Utilizing existing capital and non-recurring funds took out \$194,904. Deferring purchases took out \$171,844. Utilizing LOCIP funds took out \$91,000.

#### No change to our taxes

A spreadsheet I prepared from the school's site, building and capital equipment priorities helped the council elevate safety improvements over many other requests.

Hopefully this letter has provided some highlights and a source for further details that will help Berlin Citizens share their thoughts for the priorities we are considering in Berlin. I can be reached at the hearing, at my published home phone or [dkeatbrtc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dkeatbrtc@sbcglobal.net). I look forward to hearing from as many of you as possible.

Sincerely,  
David Evans