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Dear Editor,

Berlin property owners who will vote at the town wide budget referendum on Tuesday April 28th are in an enviable position. Why is that? Voters can help determine if they will pay less in taxes this year compared to last year. How often does that happen? Not very often, maybe every 5 years at revaluation for a few lucky ones who are unlucky their home value went down. Interestingly, according to the Labor Department, consumer prices have dropped 0.4%, the first 12-month decline since a similar drop for the year ending August 1955 (<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/cpi.nr0.htm>). Although cyclical in the industry I buy for, lower prices is typical of a "buyer's market" which I am seeing and taking the opportunity it affords both at work and at home. This year in Berlin we have the opportunity to decide the level and effectiveness of our taxes in this "voter's market". All no votes will signal the need for the Town Council to reexamine the proposed budget, not only to lower it, but for better balance of needs considering the Town with its' increasing number of potholes and who or what in the BOE budget makes the biggest impact for our children.

The Town Council is recommending a zero mill increase budget. This sounds good until you factor in the effect on your taxes from revaluation last year and the state of the economy this year. What our town needs to do this year sounds pretty familiar to what most of us have had to do with our own budgets. I watched and listened closely to the Town Manager's significant efforts at ALL the budget sessions to make ends meet for the Town side of the budget which included replacing the use of cell phones with existing two way radios and other creative solutions. Similar to the Town Manager, each of you have had to get creative and like myself you may have had to negotiate better insurance rates and lower prices for lawn care options, refinance your mortgage, and cut unnecessary expenditures. Now we have one more home budget item we can impact the effectiveness of, our taxes. Although the Town Council has given the BOE a 2% increase over last year the BOE has seemed to find a way to prioritize their budget and still provide pay raises to administrators (at least from the proposed approaches they have publicized). The Southington Schools Superintendent of Schools set the example by taking no pay raise this year. Well run companies have recognized the need to prioritize as they have not given merit pay raises this year for their management and have limited and delayed the same for other employees. The Town Council's last several years of 6% spending increases, only recently reigned in to 3.6% last year by the majority of voters, has made it fairly easy for the Council to present a proposed zero mill increase budget.

Still need more help to make your decision? 1,981 individuals who voted in last year's budget referendum 1,400 (71%) voted NO/against and 581 (29%) voted YES/for. Of the 1,779 Berlin resident registered property owners that voted 46% were Democrats, 31% were Republicans and 23% were Unaffiliated or Libertarian. This was not just the Republicans trying to send a clear message to our Town Council. Maybe this year the Citizen's Managing Editor needs to stop worrying about being politically correct, whichever side of the political aisle he may be thought to be leaning, and help his struggle to pay bills along with the rest of us by voting to ensure some tax relief this year. Voting no has the best probability of our taxes going down and providing a balanced impact on our services and most importantly preparing us for a more difficult year next year. It's up to all of us! For budget information and a review of what happened to your taxes last year using the Final 2008 Berlin Tax Calculator go to BerlinGOP.com. Be sure to vote at the town wide budget referendum on Tuesday April 28th so you'll have the possibility of being the envy of many Connecticut residents outside of Berlin – being one who's taxes actually went down in 2009.

Sincerely,

David Evans