

Your Votes Matter

Dear Editor,

When will your votes in Berlin matter? Last year when the budget referendum was voted down town 'officials' (Mayor Salina, Bob Dacey and Steve Morelli) indicated in this paper that while they would have liked the budget to pass, they were even more discouraged at the degree of participation from the public. Why were they discouraged? Could it be because the majority Council's average 5 to 6% per year budget increases over the past several years had been uncovered by voters and rejected?

This year when the budget referendum passed, the Mayor suggested voters' should have to petition to send the budget to referendum. Deputy Mayor Morelli indicated the town wasted money on this referendum. Does that mean 846 people wasted their time too? Or does the majority Council feel it is a waste of their time listening to voters? Maybe if voters felt that the majority Council listened to them the number of voter's would increase and the cost per voter would go down substantially. The majority Council needs to appreciate and respect those of us who do vote and not dismiss us by looking to make it more difficult to vote.

If your votes do not matter to the majority Council maybe your comments will. Although it will be much more difficult, since public speaking is America's top fear (Boston.com 2009). A public hearing is set for Tuesday, May 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm in the Town Council Chambers at Town Hall to consider spending \$1 million dollars for 'relocatable' classrooms as well as 'preferential' treatment for some local bidders. I wonder how this year's 846 budget referendum voters would have voted if they had known that shortly after voting for a zero mill budget they'd be asked by the majority Council to spend more money. The last 'relocatable' classrooms were so expensive to move they could not be sold when they were no longer needed and were scrapped. Maybe the 351 referendum voters who voted no this year were on to something. I think all voters may want to weigh in on the 'preferential' treatment for some local bidders who may be constituents of the majority Council and could benefit at the expense of all voters.

Since there appears to be an impending referendum on trash collection, maybe the majority Council should suspend the automated collection implementation and let voters 'weigh' in on the matter by having two referendums for the price of one. Or better yet, have the referendums during elections coming in November, since the majority Council seem to be so worried about the expense of voting. And why not throw in a public hearing on trash collection for good measure? Especially since none was held when the majority Council decided to make a change in trash collection, a change that affects the majority of the town on a weekly basis.

Whether the voter or public hearing turnout is small or large, elected officials, especially the majority Council, need to represent and understand all of the community. Is the issue the amount or is it the mix of services or is it the quality? Let's do more than suppose we know by talking to the same people we always talk to. I encourage all 846 budget referendum voters let us know why they voted yes or no at the budget referendum. And if you didn't vote let us know why not. Take the survey on the Media page of the BerlinGOP.com website or send an email there, or send a letter to the BRTC's Kensington PO Box 333, or talk to a BRTC member. Because your votes matter!

Sincerely,

David Evans