

Letter to the Editor: Clifton Real Estate Taxes to Rise 22 Tax Points

As a Clifton taxpayer, I am outraged that the Clifton City Council voted 7 to 0 at the Sept. 15, 2009 meeting to raise Clifton real estate taxes by 22 tax points (14 tax points for City plus 8 tax points for the Clifton School Board and County side will remain flat). To calculate the actual dollar amount of the increase in your property taxes, you would use this equation: $(\$0.22 \text{ times total assessed value of your property}) \div 100$. For example in my case this would be an increase of almost \$1000.

On the City side, this budget includes \$1.6 million for emergency health care fund (Clifton is self-insured and had a shortfall in the fund last year); \$1.9 million in a self insurance trust fund to pay claims (such as the recent award of a sexual harassment case—we have a \$150,000 deductible per claim); \$1.1 million for tax appeals. The state of NJ granted the City a waiver in the amount of \$3.7 million (or 6.7 tax points) which allowed the City to raise taxes significantly above the cap. (I guess we should thank the State for being so generous with our hard earned tax dollars, right?) Additionally, the City deferred \$3.5 million in pension costs which the City will have to start repaying in 2011. The 100% paid medical benefits for City workers such as the police, fireman and some City workers is costing taxpayers several million dollars. For example, this budget includes \$3.4million for medical benefits of active employees in the police department and \$3.0 million for medical benefits of active employees in the fire department. Finally, the budget does include raises for the unionized employees of the City like police and firemen.

On the school board side, imagine taxpayers are paying an increase of 8 tax points even though the school budget failed and the Council cut \$1 million or almost 2 tax points off this failed budget. Again, the school board thought nothing of recently giving non-unionized employees a 7%-8% raise. So the notion that school board has less money when school board budgets fail is a fallacy.

On top of this outrageous 22 tax point increase, Clifton taxpayers will have to pay the ever increasing sewer charges (and service fee). With tax appeals (both residential and commercial/industrial) at record levels, foreclosures at historic levels, when will our elected officials realize that Clifton taxpayers are broke! Both Clifton working families and Clifton senior citizens are on fixed budgets as no one is getting a raise this year (unless you work for the Clifton school district or are a unionized City employee). A 22 tax point increase will force more and more families and senior citizens from their homes. Clifton elected officials are out of touch with the realities that Clifton taxpayers face! Clifton voters need to take back Clifton!

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