

The Epping Taxing Times

Volume 2 Issue 1—March 2008

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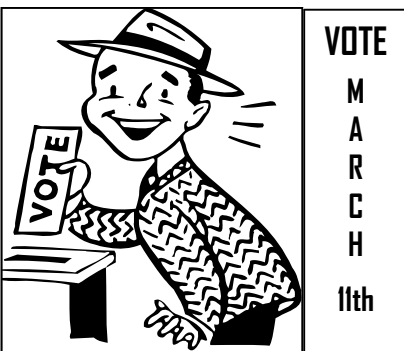
PO Box 198—Epping, NH — 03042

SHADES OF 1776!

Your Right to Vote Is Under Siege!

55 Sign A Petition Asking To Rescind SB2 Official Ballot Voting !

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VOTE
M
A
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11th

DOES SB 2 WORK?

You bet it does!

Your RIGHT to vote on ALL Town and School issues is now done:

1. In the PRIVACY of a voting booth;
2. With the added advantage of ALL day voting;
3. And, by ABSENTEE ballot for those who cannot get out to the polls.

TO KEEP SB2 Vote NO
Article 21.....Town Ballot
Article 4.....School Ballot

Town Warrant Money Articles	Tax
Art. 5: Road Bond *	\$500,000 0
Art. 6: Operating Budget Proposed.....	\$5,243,464 3.02
Default Operating Budget.....	\$5, 015,730 2.66
Art. 7: Town Hall Improvement**	\$20,000 0
Art. 8: Landfill Closure	\$5,000 .01
Art. 9: Library Employee.....	\$8,000 .01
Art. 10: Town Clerk Employee.....	\$11,400 .02
(In 2009 = \$14,400)	
Art. 11: Police Contract.....	\$28,236 Yr 1 .04
(3-year total = \$147,168)	
Art. 12: 2 Police Cruisers.....	\$25,340 .04
Yr 1—(3 Yr lease total = \$76,020; \$1 buyout)	
Art. 13: Police Det Vehicle.....	\$15,000 .02
(Used—Direct Purchase)	
Art. 14: FD Pickup Truck.....	\$29,000 0
(From PSF Fund)	
Art. 15: Ambulance Power Cot.....	\$10,636 0
(From PSF Fund)	
Art. 16: Ambulance Auto Pulse.....	\$16,000 0
(From PSF Fund)	
Art. 17: Transfer Sta. Truck.....	\$20,000 .03
Art. 18: EPTV Equip Fund.....	\$6,376.92 0
(Paid out of Cable Franchise Fees)	
Art. 20: Recreation Bus.....	\$14,000 .02
Art. 22: Lamprey Soccer League.....	\$2,000 .01
Art. 23: EYAA.....	\$3,000 .01
Art. 24: Paint Median Lines.....	\$4,012.80 .01
Art 28 thru 34: Social Services.....	\$15,310 .02
Estimate Town Tax Rate: Proposed Budget + Articles	3.26
Estimate Town Tax Rate: Default Budget + Articles	2.90

* Road Bond no 2008 impact / hits tax rate in 2009
** From budget surplus—could be used to reduce tax impact

School Warrant Money Articles	Tax
Art. 1: Teachers' Contract.....	\$1,164,097 .58
Aggregate Total for 3 Years	(2008)
Art. 2: Paraprofessional Contract.....	\$359,125.00 .11
Aggregate Total for 3 Years	(2008)
Art. 3: Proposed Operating Budget.....	\$15,263,075 13.71
Default Operating Budget.....	\$15,234,587 13.67
Estimate Schl Tax Rate: ...Proposed Budget + Articles	14.40
Estimate Schl Tax Rate:Default Budget + Articles	14.36

Choose Wisely!

SB2 Not Working? Not Working for Whom?

Selectman Dianne Gilbert

On March 11, voters will be asked to decide whether to rescind RSA 40:13, otherwise known as SB2 official ballot voting, or keep it. The question will appear on both the Town and School ballots as Article 21 and Article 4 respectively. If at least 60% of the voters say yes to each of these articles, they will have removed their right to vote on ALL town and school money issues in each of these jurisdictions.

What does passing these articles mean to the voters? First it means a return to what the petitioners call the "traditional town meeting." But it is more aptly described, as a return to the mob rule mentality of the special interest meeting. Secondly, it means voters who are unable to attend the town and school district meetings lose their right to vote on all the issues raised at those meetings. Why would these 55 petitioners seek to deny anyone their constitutionally protected right to vote? They say it's because SB2 doesn't work!

Does SB2 Work? Indeed it does! You only need to check the number of voters SB2 brings out during town and school district meeting to learn the truth. Since March of 2000, when SB2 was first accepted, the number of voters has trended upward. Instead of the mere few hundred voters who come out to attend the proverbial "traditional town meeting" to decide how to spend taxpayer money and on what, we now have as many as 1200 or 1500 voters participating in the process. How significant has been the trend? A cursory glance at

(Continued on page 2 SB2 Not Working?)

School Board Chairman, Jeff Le Duc said he only wanted to "start a discussion" to improve upon SB2.



But..., if you believe that bull..., I have an ocean front property in Arizona to sell you. The goal is to get you back into a gymnasium where "they" can control the vote.

Selectman Dianne Gilbert

SB2 Not Working? Not Working for Whom? _Selectman Dianne Gilbert

(Continued from page 1 - SB2 Not Working?)

the polling numbers shows that voter participation has increased on the order of 7 to 8 fold. That is a much healthier situation than the one voters suffer under the "traditional town meeting" where the mob's rules prevail and everyone's constitutionally protected rights are put at risk.

For what or whom does SB2 NOT work? Well obviously the *self-interest* of those who signed the petition to take away your voting rights. SB2 knocked the wind out of their sails; it neutralized their undue influence to steer the ship of town and school government in whatever direction best suited them.

Who are the 55 petitioners? Interestingly enough, the list reads like a "Who's Who" in Epping town and school government. With the exception of perhaps a dozen or so petitioners, the list is replete with the names of town and school public officials, or employees and in some cases their respective spouses. In part, they are the names of those who customarily gather by group to sit high in the bleachers staring down upon the "traditional town meeting" watching how the rest of the meeting votes or they are those officials who sit in the front of the room doing much the same thing.

But more specifically, it is important to note that the self-admitted organizer of the move to rescind SB2 is the current chairman of the School Board, Jeff LeDuc, who is leaving that seat to run for the Budget Committee this year. Mr. LeDuc, claims his *only objective* in putting *your right* to vote to the test, by initiating the petition, was to get a dialogue going! And if you believe that, I have an ocean front property in Arizona to sell you.

Who else stands out having signed the petition? For one, outgoing Budget Committee Chairman, Jim McGeough, who is seeking to replace his wife, Susan, on the Board of Selectmen. Jim is among those who claim that under SB2, you are *not sufficiently informed* on the issues before you vote on them.

However, if you watched the Budget Committee public hearing on January 15th, you would have witnessed Jim stalling on a request to summarize the Town Budget, department by department, for the benefit of those watching on EPTV-22. The excuse offered up was that it had ALL been discussed at previous Budget Committee meetings and there was no need to go through it again. Yet... the specific purpose of that public hearing is to give the voters **FINAL** information, the *facts and figures* they need in order **TO VOTE INFORMED!** Go figure!

So as not to pick on just two of the petitioners, McGeough's position to not summarize the budget for EPTV viewers was backed up by no further support for the request; so it was not done. But take note, five other *elected* members of the Budget Committee, most of whom, if not all, were present at the public hearing, signed the petition to rescind SB2; they are: Amy Randall, Brenda McCartney, Michelle Cromarty, Sandra Osgood, Tom Dwyer and Selectmen's representative, Jeff Harris. These are names to remember if you see them on the ballot running for office now or in the future.



What is said to be wrong with SB2? First of all *they* claim because of SB2, you vote uninformed. But I have already exposed the hypocrisy of that argument. Second, they also say, the time between the deliberative session and the actual voting is too long. Given that, they say you all tend to forget what was discussed at the deliberative session.

But they overlook a few KEY facts: (1) That we now live in a *technology driven* age, which affords the voter a vast array of options to view and review various meetings at will; (2) Also, that voters know how to obtain copies of the warrant and the Town Report and read it for themselves. (3) The lapse *between* the deliberative session and when the actual voting takes place, gives voters all the **more** time to seek out, research and even ask clarifying questions of public officials, if needed.

But let's dispense with the games! To respond to the petitioners' inane assertions is to treat their foolish claims as if they carried a modicum of credibility. Simply stated, there is *nothing wrong* with a process that brings people INTO government and puts them in control of it; and, that is one claim that those who long for the return of the out-moded "traditional town meeting" cannot make. But SB2 can make that claim and here is how SB2 goes about engaging a greater number of voters in the political process:

1. SB2 expands voting access making the process available to a greater number of voters who wish to exercise this constitutionally protected right;
2. SB2 provides for the time-saving convenience of ALL DAY voting; no more sitting through those long, arduous, annual town meetings that run late into the night and oftentimes across multiple nights;
3. SB2 provides voters with the opportunity to vote in the privacy of a voting booth. Gone are the steely stares, the hissing, booing and mocking laughter of the special interest. This *organized behavior* is the driving force behind the low attendance at Town and School District meeting and, yes, the Deliberative session as well.
4. SB2 embraces all voters who wish to exercise their right to vote; and, for those who cannot physically make it to the polls, SB2 supports ABSENTEE BALLOT voting. For, no registered voter should lose his right to vote because he or she cannot physically attend a meeting, whether the absence is due to a work conflict, poor health, age, lack of transportation, bad weather, military obligation or anything else.

SB2 is about bringing registered voters INTO the process of running *their* government and there can be NOTHING wrong with that scenario. **Protect your right to vote and participate in the political process free of the pressures of the "tradition town meeting". KEEP SB2!**

VOTE NO on Article 21 on the town ballot.

VOTE NO on Article 4 on the school ballot.

_Dianne Gilbert, Epping Selectman

Update on the ERPGI Civil Rights Law Suit

AND THE BEAT GOES ON..... THE ERPGI CIVIL SUIT REFRESHER

This article is an effort to dispel the idea that some Epping officials have that this case was brought on to stop them from informing the public concerning warrant articles.

The following outlines the numerous wrong doings and arrogance of the town and school officials in this case. This is a civil rights case brought to challenge First Amendment violations by governmental officials in the Town of Epping, from whom money damages are sought for activities occurring in 2004 and 2005.

The challenged activities include:

1. Numerous tax funded mailings presenting one side of an issue to the legislative body of the Town, namely its voters when assembled in a town or school meeting;
2. Advocacy by sending one-sided communications home with students;
3. Presenting a one-sided presentation at the high school; and
4. Presenting a one-sided parent newsletter endorsing a group that was supporting public expenditures and taking only one side of the issue: the spenders' side.

The important points to remember are:

1. Public funds cannot be used for the preparation of "campaign" material.
2. If material that impermissibly advocates a particular viewpoint is distributed by the government, the government must allow those with opposing views to distribute material in the same manner the material containing impermissible advocacy was distributed. This should not be construed as

permitting the expenditure on advocacy positions in the first place. **Presently the case is scheduled to be heard in November 2008.**

NOTE: Please stay on the lookout for government advocacy. If you receive any documents you know were produced and/or distributed using public assets of any nature (money, equipment, public employees, etc..) which advocate to sway the vote on issues going before the voters, we would appreciate your letting us know. Your confidentiality will be preserved.

As the Supreme Court of New York, Albany County has ruled, "The governmental view would most always prevail if its overwhelming financial resources could be used to support issues that are in the domain of the electorate. To hold otherwise would allow State government to monopolize the market place of ideas and to smother opposing opinions."

The same can be applied to any level of government to include Town and School government. Please contact Epping Residents for Principled Government (ERPG) if you any questions or material relating to Town or School government officials, or their employees, using public property to sway an election outcome.

For additional details:

Visit us on the web at www.eppingnospinzone.com.

Stay In Touch With What's Going On In
Epping Town & School Government

Visit ERPGI on the web at:

WWW.EPPINGNOSPINZONE.COM

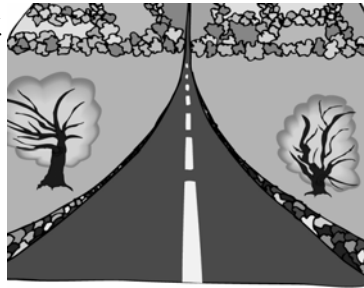
Article 5 Town Ballot —The Highway Road Bond

Article 5 on the Town ballot asks the voters to approve a \$500,000 bond for the purpose of road repairs and road reconstruction. Since 1989, Epping voters have wisely approved three road bonds totaling \$1.3 million to preserve the integrity of the Town's road system. Good roads and bridges are among the most important assets that comprise the town's infrastructure.

Epping also shares in the State Highway Block Grant. Last year the distribution from the state to Epping was just shy of \$127,000. While a significant amount, depending on the length and condition of the road to be repaired, this amount of money may not be near enough to cover all costs. Take, for example, the cost to rebuild Nottingham Square road, which is estimated to be \$189,928.

The Town's growing population combined with the variability of New England weather take their toll upon the Town's road system. With that in mind, it becomes necessary to periodically evaluate the condition of the Town's roads to see where we stand.

The most recent evaluation revealed that fourteen (14) town roads require some level of attention: twelve (12) were in need of resurfacing and two (2) required a total reconstruction. Taken together, it is estimated that these fourteen roads representing approximately 7 miles of pavement, will cost \$530,043 to repair. This figure is based on an already secured fixed price for asphalt at \$59/ton; this price also includes installation. Wolcott Paving, with whom Epping's Highway Department has enjoyed a long and successful history, will hold the contract.



While it is difficult to calculate a meaningful cost per mile average, to give you some idea of the expense involved, a half mile of road repair consisting of a 2" shim/overlay could easily reach as high as \$45,000. While expensive, this figure does include the necessary preparation such as ditching, shimming, and patching to make the road ready to receive the asphalt. Some roads may require even more preparation, for example, a road in need of a complete rebuild would require not only grinding of its existing pavement, but a regarding as well.

The estimated total cost of the road bond, based upon a 3.5% interest rate is \$552,500. The impact to the tax rate would be deferred until 2009, at which time, based upon the current tax base, is estimated to be 18¢. Then in year 2 through year 5, the tax impact stands to diminish as the principal is paid down but also if the tax base were to expand

It is in the best interest of the Town, therefore the taxpayers, to preserve and maintain the Town's infrastructure.

**Vote YES on Article 5
The Road Bond-- on the Town Ballot.**

Article 6 Town Ballot—The Operating Budget

Town Budget Summary

Under SB2, two budgets are prepared each year for voter consideration: the **proposed** budget, which may contain new spending, and the **default** budget, which is last year's budget adjusted by **voter approved** warrant article spending from the prior town meeting and other non-discretionary spending driven by contractual commitments, healthcare premiums or items of that nature.

Why do we use the terms *estimated* or *projected* when talking about the tax rate? Much can change in the budgeting process between the creation of the operating budget and the actual setting of the tax rate by the NH Department of Revenue. One thing we don't really know for sure is how much revenue will be taken in during the year; revenues can only be estimated. A well functioning Town will estimate those revenues conservatively, department by department where applicable, to ensure that the amount to be raised by taxes is not understated in order to avoid an unpleasant surprise at tax setting time.

Yet another reason to only *project* the tax rate at this point in time, is that towards the end of the fiscal year, the Selectmen will review the General Fund to determine if surplus revenues exist, and if so, the size of the surplus. If sizeable, the Selectmen will generally vote to return that money to the people by "buying down the tax rate". In reality, the selectmen are applying this money to reduce that portion of the budget referred to as the **amount to be raised by taxes**.

But that's not all. There are also changes to the tax base to consider. Currently, the value of the tax base is \$638,276,000; however, it is subject to change after April 1 as new properties or adjustments to existing properties are picked up and factored into the tax base. If the tax base expands to become more valuable, the cost of **existing projects** become less burdensome on the taxpayers. But in order for the taxpayer to see his burden lessen, government must spend wisely and frugally. This is where you, the voting public, enter the picture. You have the means, **under SB2**, to vote privately on and thereby control **ALL** discretionary government spending.

What follows now is a brief overview of this year's *proposed* and *default* budgets, *Article 6 on the Town ballot*.

The PROPOSED BUDGET:

The total proposed budget appropriation of \$5,243,464 is comprised of both Town and Water and Sewer (W&S) revenues and spending. When the W&S spending of \$1,080,006 is subtracted out from the appropriated amount, it leaves **\$4, 163,458** to run the Town. From this amount is subtracted the expected revenues (both Town + W&S) of **\$3,316, 296** leaving **\$1,927,168** to be raised from taxes. If the voters approve this year's **proposed budget**, the estimated tax impact is **\$3.02** or **36¢** over the 2007 tax rate of \$2.66, based upon the current tax base.

But we're not done yet; there is additional spending contained in the

various warrant articles. If *all* the **money** warrant articles were to pass, that spending will add an estimated **24¢** to the tax rate. When that amount is added to the **proposed budget** spending, Epping taxpayers will be looking at an estimated **town tax rate** of **\$3.26** or **60¢** over the 2007 tax rate of \$2.66.

But do be sure to read the wording of the warrant articles closely, for not all spending will hit the 2008 tax rate. Some spending will come from money that has already been set aside. You will see this occurring across **Articles, 14, 15, and 16** (Fire/Ambulance spending), as well as **Article 18** (EPTV maintenance and expansion from cable user fees), **Article 7** (to come from general fund surplus) and **Article 19**, which establishes a revolving fund for the recreation department.

DEFAULT BUDGET:

The default budget this year is, **\$5,015,730**. As above, it is also comprised of both Town and W&S revenues and spending. When W&S spending (**\$1,064,163**) is subtracted out, there remains **\$3,951,567** to run the town. Adjusting the total appropriation for revenues, leaves **\$1,699,434** to be raised by taxes resulting in a zero impact on the 2007 tax rate of **\$ 2.66**. But again, the money warrant articles must be considered, if all were to pass, it would add **24¢** to the town's portion of the tax rate for an estimated tax rate of **\$2.90**.

Increases to the proposed budget over the default budget.

This year the Budget Committee called for all departments to flatten their budgets, and most town departments were able to comply. But others experienced double digit increases over their previous year's bottom line. These departments are listed in the table below:

Valuation of property: Appraisal contract, etc.	\$ 31,500
Ambulance¹	\$ 78,524
Fire Department	\$ 41,435
Recreation Department	\$ 19,175
Highway	\$ 63,226
Police	\$ 17,438
Total Increase:	\$251,298.00

¹: A large portion of the Ambulance budget is explained by the addition of one full time employee. Voters approved the addition of a fulltime Firefighter/EMT (672 to 632) on the 2007 Warrant (Article 8).

**Vote YES on Article 6
Town Operating Budget...Town Ballot**

Watch the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves!

Cryptoquote Puzzle:
Wise Advice From One Who Should Know:

"GMDX EIBQUXFSXU UOXXJ MHW NOX TIFSXU TLFF XMN EIB"
_RXH ZQMHDFLH

**VOTE NO TO KEEP SB2
ON
ARTICLE 21.....Town Ballot
ARTICLE 4.....School Ballot**

**Grievances Against Government Should be Brought Before the New Hampshire Legislature
...NOT Heard in State Courts! —The Hon. Dan Itse**

Editor's Note: There was a time in New Hampshire's history when a citizen could petition the New Hampshire Legislature if he had been aggrieved by his government. Many issues, like those ERPGI has raised concerning the behavior of local government, would not have gone to court; they would have been brought before the New Hampshire General Court to be heard by the Legislature in a far more efficient and most certainly less expensive way. Representative Dan Itse, representing both Epping and Fremont in the NH House, has filed legislation to restore this once accessible option to the people. Just think how poor some lawyers will become *when* we can once again petition our Legislators to intervene against an overreaching local government. Rep Itse can use your support on this bill.

The Constitution for the United States of America was inspired by the Constitutions of the several States. Notably, the Convention was modeled on the Convention to draft the Constitution for the State of New Hampshire, the first such convention in the world. In turn, the Constitutions for the States drew heavily on the English Bill of Rights.

One of the most important Articles in the English Bill of Rights is its last: "And that for redress of all grievances, and for the amending, strengthening and preserving of the laws, Parliaments ought to be held frequently."

Based upon this Article the Parliament is the court of last resort in England. Anyone wronged by government can appeal to Parliament to have that wrong righted. Accordingly, **Part 1, Article 31** of the Constitution of the State of New Hampshire states: "*The Legislature shall assemble for the redress of public grievances and for making such laws as the public good may require*". **Article 32** goes even farther stating: "The people have a right, in an orderly and peaceable manner, to assemble and consult upon the common good, give instructions to their Representatives, and to request of the legislative body, by way of petition or remonstrance, redress of the wrongs done them, and of the grievances they suffer".

The people of New Hampshire have a positive right to have their petitions for the redress of grievances they suffer heard by the Legislature.

Based upon these two Articles, our Legislature, the General Court of New Hampshire, frequently heard petitions for the redress of grievances well into the 1800s. This was a large fraction of the business of the Legislature. They

ranged from reparations for injury by towns or town officials to re-trials when the Judiciary had denied due process. The practice was that if you felt you had been aggrieved by government you would find a Legislator to introduce a petition on your behalf. The General Court would then assign it to a committee to determine its merit and recommend a redress if appropriate. After an amendment to the Constitution in 1792, this avenue of redress could be had without cost.

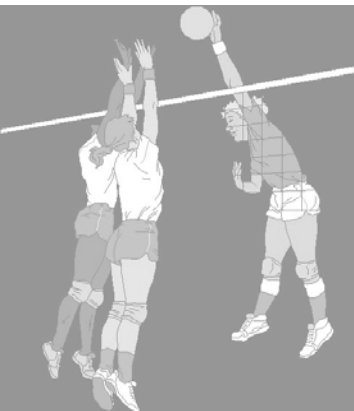
This practice began to dwindle after the Judiciary exempted itself from redress of grievances in 1819 through less than forthright arguments, but that's a subject for another article. The due process for redress of grievances, how parties to a petition for redress were to be notified, were continued in our laws through the re-codification in 1925. However, in the next re-codification the law was simply dropped, not repealed, dropped. Then in 1963 the Legislature created Legislative Services to draft legislation. Legislators are no longer allowed to draft and introduce legislation themselves. Legislative Services was empowered to draft bills and resolutions, but not petitions. Last year when I tried to introduce a petition, the House Clerk told me I had to go through Legislative Services, and Legislative Services told me they couldn't draft the petition. The mechanism for introducing petitions for the redress of grievances has been completely removed. The people are being denied their constitutional right.

It is important to note that the final and summary indictment in the Declaration of Independence reads as follows: "In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms; our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people."

This session, I have introduced a bill (HB1543) to re-establish the mechanism for introducing petitions for the redress of grievances. The bill simply empowers Legislative Services to draft petitions and creates a system of due process. If passed, you would be able to have your grievance heard by the governmental body over which the people have the most control, and it would cost you only the gas and time to go there. Imagine free and open justice!

—NH Rep. Dan Itse
Serving Epping & Fremont

Articles 19 & 20 — Recreation Revolving Fund / Bus



Article 19 on the Town Ballot, was spearheaded by Selectman Jeffrey Harris and subsequently approved by the Board of Selectmen with the objective that Recreation Department programs become user-funded. If passed, the revolving fund will capture all user fees, year to year, for the *express* purpose of expanding and running all recreation programs.

The revolving fund is intended to offload taxpayer funding of Recreation Department programs making these programs user-fee based. If Article 19 is approved, the Recreation

Department will have the flexibility to grow its program offerings without burdening those who do not use these programs.

Starting next year, the Recreation Department budget should have only those line items dealing directly with the Director's salary and benefits. All funding of that department's programs will be paid for by those who use the services.

ERPGI recommends passage of this warrant article. But caution is in order; it will be important to remain vigilant to insure that the Selectmen and the Budget Committee uphold the spirit with which the article is written and proposed. For, the days were not so long ago when the Epping Recreation Department was once a wholly volunteer organization. It now submits budgets in excess of \$200,000. One last note, the current Budget Committee has at least 4 sitting members that are also on the Recreation Committee. Do not let go of that fact.

Article 20 on the Town ballot is yet another recreation article asking you to approve \$14,000 for the purchase of a handicap accessible bus. ERPGI sees the sense of this purchase but not the necessity. We recommend, instead, that the money to be spent on this purchase be used to purchase a pickup truck for the Recycle Center, an investment that has the potential of adding revenues to that department and thereby reducing its operating costs.

VOTE YES Article 19 on the Town Ballot.

VOTE NO Article 20 on the Town Ballot.

Article 3 School Ballot—Operating Budget

This year the School Board will present to the voters a **proposed school budget** totaling \$15, 263,075, and a default budget of \$15,234,587, a difference of \$28,488 and a saving of 5¢ on the school tax rate.

For all intent and purpose the School Board complied with the Budget Committee's request to produce a flat budget; however, the School Board could have gone even farther. For example, the School Board found they could cut regular education by \$70,662, vocational education by another \$45,000 and support benefits and other support accounts by \$127,043. However, this money never left the budget; it merely landed on other line items. For example, some \$65,056 went to the Special Education budget. To the Operation of Plant budget went another \$57,000 and yet another \$40,919 went to Educational Media.

But, here's the rub, **\$32,000** of that money went to enrich the paychecks of **9 school administrators retroactive to last year**. The table below outlines to whom and how much:

Administrative Salary Increases ⁽¹⁾			
Position	2007/2008	2008/2009	Difference
Superintendent	\$93,150	\$97,808	\$4,658.00
Business Manager	\$67,275	\$70,639	\$3,364.00
Special Ed Coordinator	\$72,067	\$75,670	\$3,603
Elementary Principal	\$81,000	\$85,050	\$4,050
Ass't Elem Principal	\$55,000	\$57,750	\$2,750
Middle School Principal	\$78,000	\$81,900	\$3,900
Asst Mid. School Principal	\$55,000	\$57,750	\$2,750
High School Principal	\$83,500	\$87,675	\$4,175
Ass't High School Principal	\$55,000	\$57,750	\$2,750
Totals	\$639,992.00	\$671,992.00	\$32,000.00

(Continued on page 7- Art. 3 School Operating Budget)

Epping Speaks Out— Your Editorial Page

“Get Off the Sidelines... Before It’s Too Late”

I played by the rules, followed the law, paid my taxes timely, donated to various organizations, treated my neighbors respectfully, and employed many youths in Epping (some of who are parents today). I own and operate The Haven Restaurant and The Pondsides Motel in a reputable fashion, quietly, and without incident. I saw my world through rose colored glasses where town officials were made up of good people whose goal it was to serve their community, unselfishly, and without personal gain. That was when ignorance was bliss and life was good.

Those rose colored glasses were ripped off and crushed into a million pieces and my life was forever changed. I became an unwilling participant thrown into the confusing and often frustrating world of Town government. I quickly realized that ignorance was not bliss and educating myself on “the system”, would become a new, full-time job in addition to the restaurant and motel.

Most of us sit passively on the side lines, allowing the game of government to be played around us. After one unwarranted, however devastating tackle, The Pondsides was crippled. As my world crumbled, I was astonished to learn how much power one person could yield. I could no longer be the passive spectator. The time came to take a defensive position, so I had to get in the game and learn how our town officials and boards operate.

I went to our Town Administrator, confident that my issues would be resolved. After all, this was obviously just a big misunderstanding. I remember how nervous I was meeting with this very important person. He took copious notes, leading me to believe how important my situation was. I left that meeting thinking he would “handle” the situation. How wrong I was. He just made

things worse. It became evident to me that just because you have a fancy title, it does not automatically make you the most intelligent person in the room. And, copious note taking is not synonymous with listening or caring.

Trying not to feel defeated, I went to my Board of Selectmen. I was confident because these are the elected officials that run the Town. They will listen to common sense, exercise good judgment, provide oversight, or, at a minimum, investigate the situation.

I understand the Board of Selectmen need to support Town employees; however, blind faith in anyone is dangerous and should not be underestimated. I left that meeting feeling that my voice fell on deaf ears. We think these chosen few that sit behind the table and become stars on Epping TV to be wiser and more intelligent than ordinary citizens. However, they are just like us, with the added responsibility to serve us – The People. I was seeking oversight, which requires both eyes to be open, not realizing so many were closed, or at least, looking the other way.

I was a victim under fire, not the position anyone welcomes. Today, I feel like the wrongfully convicted felon that has just been released from prison, without even an apology. So few know the truth, and even fewer care.

I encourage others to learn from my lesson and get off the sidelines and join the game. Get to know your Town leaders, educate yourself, let your voice be heard and understand how the boards operate.

Government should be fair, open, accessible, and always operate with both eyes open.

Donna Boutin
Epping, NH

KEEP SB2!

Warrant Articles to rescind SB2 (RSA40:13)

[Article 21 on the Town ballot & Article 4 on the School ballot]

Having lived in this town nearly 60 years I find [these] articles to be very upsetting. With SB2 in place every taxpayer/resident has a chance to vote.

Epping has a large population of elderly (senior citizens) who cannot come out and sit [through] an old fashioned town meeting—one being my mother who is 87 years old, a sixty-eight year resident of Epping.

Not only for the seniors but also for younger and middle aged families. In this day and age most families are working two jobs or at least different shifts to make ends meet. Some of the families cannot afford to hire babysitters—yes there is babysitting available, but who wants to take toddlers or young school aged children out at night and then take them back home at ten or eleven pm. Even for myself and my husband. We get up at 4:45 am to go to work, work 8-11 hours a day, upon returning home don’t have the energy to do much of anything besides eat dinner and get ready for the next day.

I think if you check the records that voting has increased – because everyone has the opportunity to voice their opinion by ballot. In years past if Epping had 50-100 people show up at town meeting it would be a record turnout.

People are concerned that no one shows up at the deliberative sessions. I, and only speaking for myself, watch all the televised meetings, etc. on Channel 22. I don’t believe all the mailings that come. I listen, watch, read and then weigh the issues in my mind before voting.

In earlier town meetings it has been known to happen that a warrant article has been tabled until later after a certain amount of people have left leaving the ones that want something passed or defeated to vote on. I am remiss for not looking up the dates or wordings of the articles but two come to mind—one had something to do with the Mast Road and the other one had to do with Pine and Pond.

I strongly believe that SB2 is good for the town and school and that it benefits the taxpayers/ residents that cannot go to the old fashioned town meetings. **Please keep SB2 in place and vote NO to returning to old fashioned town meetings.**

Judith M Boisvert
Epping ,NH

Warrant Articles to Rescind SB2 Must Not Pass!

As residents and taxpayers pf Epping for over 30 years, we were pleased when SB 2 finally passed. Over the years we have attended Town meetings when intimidation seemed to be the norm.

School supporters usually sat up on the bleachers above the crowd and there were several taunts, glares and boos if a resident spoke against the article. If the vote did not go the way they wanted there was always someone waiting in the wings to jump up and have the article tabled and then low and behold, when most residents had left the meeting thinking it was over, the article was brought up again and this time passed because only their supporters had stayed behind.

It was a School meeting night when tensions were pretty high and one article was crucial to the school teachers and apparently not all the school supporters were present. Just before the vote teachers and supporters arrived in their PJs to only vote on this one article, then left. Later this was named Pajama Gate night by residents.

Meetings often ran till midnight and sometimes were carried over to another day. Then there were the secret ballots when we had to wait in line, sometimes up to an hour to put slips of paper in cardboard boxes and then the hour wait until all had voted and [been] hand counted.

Now we can vote our choice in private and pick the time of day to go and vote. Because we do not attend Deliberative sessions in no way makes us uninformed. This is the electronic age and we can watch meetings on TV, or on tape, ask questions of our elected officials, have discussions with friends, and read reports in the newspapers. After all this is our money and like most people we want to be careful how it is spent.

The Newsletters we all receive before voting gives us another side of the Articles and though everyone might not agree with the varied viewpoints, isn’t that how it should be, so we can make our own individual decisions and then vote in private?

Sylvia & Nelson Gunn
Epping, NH

Is It Current Use or...Current ABUSE? Bill & Mary Cloutier

Current AB use Assessment: Unfair, Unconstitutional

A House committee in Concord recently considered a bill that would allow land under farm buildings to be taxed at current use rates. Foresters said the exemption should include them since they are often assessed for view factors on buildings in which they store equipment. An associate of the NH Municipal Association was quoted as saying, “ after awhile, there will be six of us left paying property taxes.” An exaggeration, yes! But the point is well taken. What has happened to equal taxation?

WHAT IS CURRENT USE ASSESSMENT?

A publication of the University of NH Cooperative Extension

“There are 16,690 acres in the Town of Epping... 8,844 acres are in current use. Add the non-taxable conservation land and the figure becomes 9066 acres or 54.32%.”

states that current use assessment allows open space to be taxed on an outrageously lower property value than current land value may suggest. If you check the most recent property assessments in Epping set during the **2005 property tax revaluation**, you will note that there are numerous parcels valued **under \$1000**. Obviously, these properties must be in current use.

WHAT IS THE ASSESSED VALUE ON YOUR LOT OR ACRE OF LAND??
\$75,000,... \$95,000,... \$125,000?

(Continued on page 7 Current Use Abuse—Cloutier)

Article 11 Town Ballot—Police Contract



After suffering a sound defeat last year, the Town and the International Brotherhood of Police Officers have negotiated a new 3-year collective bargaining agreement, which they will present to the voters on March 11 for consideration. The new agreement, representing eight (8) police officers, is less costly than the agreement presented last year. If approved, Epping police will see their salaries rise an average of 30% over the life of the contract. Other gains will come in the form of one additional paid holiday as well as improvements to the earned vacation schedule.

The following table summarizes the average increases provided by the new agreement on a per year basis.:

YEAR	Average Hourly Increase Over Prior Year	Average Percentage Increase Over Prior Year
2008	\$3.17	16%
2009	\$1.30	5.9%
2010	\$1.33	5.7%
3-Yr Avg. Total	\$5.80	30%

The first increase averaging \$2.49/hr would take effect on April 1, 2008. It would then be followed by a second increase averaging 68¢ to arrive at the \$3.17/hr this year. The second increase would take effect on October 1, 2008 and will cover 7 of the 8 member fulltime police force. The April increases on a per officer basis starts at \$2.26/hr to reach a high of \$2.87/hr. The October rate increases starts at a low of 59¢/hr and reach as high as 89¢/hr.

On average, the new contract provides for an increase of \$3.17/hr this year or 16%. In 2009 the average increase is \$1.30/hr more or 5.9%, and in 2010, the average increase is \$1.33/hr or 5.7%. Over the 3-year life of the contract, the officers' hourly rate would be raised an average of \$5.80/hr or 30%.

The aggregate cost of the contract for the three years is **\$147,168.00** down **\$90,355** from last year's proposed contract. If approved, the 2008 impact to the tax rate is approximately 4¢.

ERPGI believes that police protection is a legitimate role belonging to government, and that our police force is entitled to be paid a wage that reflects the risks associated with being a police officer. In addition, we appreciate their services to the public and the professionalism they consistently apply in delivering those services. And, as previously note, this year's proposal is a substantial improvement over that presented last year..

Nonetheless, this contract does raise a few concerns for us. To begin with we question the logic of the 16% increase for 2008. We understand from the explanation given by Chief Greg Dodge that it is to make up for the increase lost last year when the voters turned down that proposal. But we question the logic of that thinking, regret the precedent it sets, and fail to see just how it supports the message the taxpayers sent to the police union in fundamentally rejecting, by more than a 2:1 margin, last year's contract. We wonder who spoke for the taxpayers in making that concession?

Secondly, we must also question **how much longer Epping taxpayers can sustain the practice, set by those they elect, of awarding annual increases to all public employees?** It is a precedent that industry would not and does not follow especially in a stumbling economy as the one we are about to enter.

**The police contract is ARTICLE 11 on the TOWN BALLOT
We're making this a: YOUR CALL!**

Article 2 School Ballot —Paraprofessional Contract

This contract covers the School District's "para-professional" staff comprised mainly of classroom aides and media specialists. The contract is between the Epping School District and the Epping Paraprofessional Association NEA-NH and NEA. It is on the School ballot as Article 2 and is a three year contract covering a reported total of 50 school employees the super majority of which are listed under category 1200, Special Education.

The contract proposes the following wage schedule:

Year	Estimate \$ Increase	Estimated Tax Impact
2008-2009	\$70,668	.11
2009-2010	\$50,500	.08
2010-2011	\$46,121	.07
Total cost for 3 years: \$359,125.00		
Calculated as ((3 * 70,668) + (2 * 50,500) + (46,121))		

In addition to providing for expanded step increases, the hourly rates for these positions will be increased by 1% in 2008-2009, 2% in 2009-2010 and by 2.5% in 2010-2011.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The paraprofessional contract calls for a **work year of 196 days (or 1,274 hrs)** to include **9 paid holidays**. The work day consists of **6.5 hours**.

Current salaries ranges for teacher-aide positions are outlined below rounded to the nearest 100 dollars:(category 1200 = special education)

- Preschool fulltime category 1200 teacher aide salaries range from a low of \$13,900 to a high of \$16,800 to average \$12.89/hr;
- Kindergarten category 1100 teacher aide salaries range from a low of \$16,200 to a high of \$16,800 to average \$12.94/hr;
- Elementary School category 1200 teacher aide salaries range from a low \$13,100 to \$22,900 to average \$12.14/hr;
- Middle School category 1200 teacher aide salaries range from a low of \$13,100 to \$22,500 to an average \$12.66/hr;
- High School category 1200 teacher aide salaries range from a low of \$14,100 to a high of \$21,400 to average \$12.74/hr;
- High School category 1100 regular education teacher-aide salaries range from a low of \$15,264 to a high of \$17,600 to average \$12.84/hr.

The proposed contract appears fair and reasonable; but again we find it troubling to support a process where individual performance is not the basis for reward.

As with the police contract, we once again find it troubling that public employees have come to expect that their salaries will be raised on an annual basis. In contrast to the private sector, where employees are not only measured on performance, but in economic downturns expect to forfeit the annual increase and even take pay cuts to remain employed. We just do not see how Epping taxpayers, especially those on fixed incomes, can sustain this practice.

In summary, the estimated tax impact for the first year is 11¢ and the total cost of the contract over 3-years is **\$359,125.00**. Using the current tax base we estimate that translate to a 56¢ impact on the school tax rate over the life of the contract.

**The Paraprofessional contract is Article 2 on the School Ballot.
We're making this YOUR CALL!**

Watch the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves!

	<p>PLEASE VOTE ON TUESDAY MARCH 11, 2008 at EPPING MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM HOURS: 8AM—7PM</p>
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Article 1 School Ballot — Teachers' Contract

After its defeat last year, the Teachers' Union and the Epping School Board reached agreement on a new contract covering changes to salary, work time, and health insurance. The new contract restores the step raises lost in last year's defeat of that contract over two years, but calls for no retroactive increase for the current school year. This proposal provides for raises beginning in the 2008/2009 school year costing taxpayers **\$367,450** and then another **\$429, 197** salary increases in the **2009/2010** school year.

The taxpayers did gain some concessions as a result of the new contract. For example, starting in the 2008/2009 school year, the teachers will pay **5% more toward their health insurance premiums** and add one work day to **extend their work year from 187 to 188 days**. In addition, the **Elementary School agreed to lengthen their work day by fifteen (15) minutes**, which works out to 6 1/2 additional days of elementary level instruction.

The **average salary increase over the life of the contract is 3.59%** after being adjusted for: the longer day, the added work day and a higher contribution to health premiums.

The total aggregated cost of the contract over its three year life is: **\$1,164,097** representing an estimated impact of **\$1.82 to the school tax rate** based upon the current tax base.

We wish to *expressly* note here that the aggregated total of \$1,164,097 will not be included in the verbiage of Article 1 as written on the School Ballot. Despite a Budget Committee request to do so, **the School Board voted to purposely withhold this information. Which again, generates an interesting hypocrisy since the entire School Board signed the petition to rescind SB2 on the grounds that, under SB2, Epping voters lacked sufficient information prior to voting on the issues!**

In summary, the proposed contract is a better deal for the taxpayers than last year; however, we believe across the board raises for teachers is inappropriate. We hold the position that teachers ought to be rewarded for their efforts based upon a demonstrated and measurable performance especially in view of the fundamental position they hold in shaping the lives of young Americans. And of course, we outright reject the notion that raises are due every year.

ERPFI applauds the effort of those who negotiated the concessions on behalf of the taxpayers. If the contract is approved, it will add 58¢ to the 2007 tax rate.

**The teachers contract is Article 1 on the School Warrant.
We're making this a: YOUR CALL!**

Article 3 School Ballot—Operating Budget (continued)

(Continued from page 4 Art. 3 School Operating Budget)

Moreover, each administrator has a support staff who also received retroactive raises. The table below reveals the cost the taxpayers approx. \$42,000:

Administration and Finance Secretarial & Program Support ⁽¹⁾			
Position	2007/2008	2008/2009	Difference
Superintendent Office	\$70,716	\$73, 840	\$2,400.17
Special Ed Coordinator	\$31,200 ⁽²⁾	\$54,872	\$23,672
Elementary School Staff	\$63,740	\$66,800	\$3,060
Middle School Staff	\$45,452	\$55,860	\$10,408
High School Staff	\$70,628	\$67,470	(\$3,158)
Program Coord. High School	\$13,750	\$15,500	\$1,750
Team Leaders Elementary	\$11,250	\$11,250	0
Team Leaders Middle School	\$6,250	\$10,000	\$3,750
Totals	\$211,070.00	\$281,752.00	\$41,882.17

¹FICA, retirement benefits, etc., or other district paid benefits not included in totals
² Offset by Federal Grant in 2007/2008 - retained in budget 2008/2009 at taxpayer expense.

Considering this, had that money been returned to the taxpayers, it would have amounted to 12¢ saving on the tax rate and, in fact, **would have funded the first year of the paraprofessional contract. Thank your School Board!**

Indeed, the time is come to chart a new course and lay down new precedent. For one thing, it is time to bury the notion that public employees are entitled to yearly salary increases, which a taxpayer on a fixed income NEVER sees. For another, there is no rhyme nor reason as to why raises forfeited in one year, are to be made up in the next year. Taxpayers do not owe the promise of annual pay hikes. Industry doesn't work that way and neither should government.

But, take note of WHY these administrators received no raise last year . It was because the voters handed the School Board a **default budget**. This is an excellent reason for handing the School Board a **default budget again** this year! With that, ERPFI thinks it is time that *ALL pay raises* be put on the warrant for voter scrutiny and not build them into the budget

In summary, if the School Board and the Budget Committee had done their job, which is to LOOK OUT for YOU—the proposed school budget would've been FLATTENED to absorb the cost of the two labor contracts. Otherwise, there is not an element of truth in the statement: "No impact to the tax rate"! If both labor contracts are passed, along with the proposed school budget it will add 69¢ to the 2007 school tax rate of \$13.71 raising it to \$14.40. And... with Wall Street and market analysts predicting recession, ERPFI urges you to send the School Board another default budget.

VOTE NO Article 3 on the School Ballot

Is It Current Use or...Current ABUSE? (Continued) Bill & Mary Cloutier

(Continued from page 5- Current Use Abuse—Cloutier)

There is no justification for this unbelievable, undeniably, unconstitutional inequity!

According to the most recent statistics provided by the Current Use Board, there are 16,690 acres in the Town of Epping of which 8,844 acres are in current use. Add the non-taxable conservation land and the figure becomes 9066 acres or 54.32%. More than half of the acreage in Epping is taxed at ridiculously reduced rate. Every year more and more land is designated as non-taxable conservation land or current use land. Your tax dollars are subsidizing the under valued revenue collected from this current use land. After awhile there will be two of us left paying property taxes. **YOU and ME!!**

There are presently fourteen members on the Current Use Board who annually review and establish current use assessment values on the categories of Farm Land, Forest Land, Unproductive Land and Wetlands. According to the December 28, 2007 edition of *Friday Review* published by the New Hampshire Farm Bureau Federation, Inc. the proposed rule sets the current ranges as follows:

Farmland	\$25 to \$425 per acre
Forest Land	\$20 to \$198 per acre
Unproductive Land	\$20 per acre

It is the opinion of this writer that these values are completely and disgracefully unrealistic! How do those numbers compare with the value placed on

your property?

There is a history of Current Use bias since its inception in 1973. Back in the early 1990s a judicial opinion was called for relative to a legislative proposal that would increase the amount of the penalty on land taken out of current use in less than 10 years. This legislation was intended to offset some of the lost tax revenue experienced in towns with 50% or more of their taxable land in the current use program. Three of the five New Hampshire Supreme Court Justices owned land enrolled in current use at that time.

According to an article in the New Hampshire Sunday News entitled: **"Ruling Favors Large Landowners,"** Attorney H. Bernard Waugh, Jr., who filed a memorandum with the state Supreme Court on this issue on behalf of the New Hampshire Municipal Association,¹ argued against giving the current use landowners special consideration.

Upon hearing the justices had land in current use, Waugh laughed and said: "It wouldn't surprise me at all. That's the way current use has been. That factor has been present in any discussion of current use ever taken place in the state. I don't know what percentage of legislators have land in current use, but it wouldn't surprise me if it was a majority," (July 18, 1993)

Wake up, Epping taxpayers!! The property tax burden has shifted to small property owners ineligible for the current use program. Be aware that this unfair taxation is being loaded on your already over-burdened backs!! There must be a challenge to this travesty and outrageous unconstitutional injustice!

¹ Now renamed the Local Government Center.

Ballot Recommendations

TOWN BALLOT	
BUDGET COMMITTEE—3 Years Vote for <u>ONE</u> & Write-in <u>One</u>	
MARK LECLERC	●
WRITE IN: TAMMY PARENTEAU SHENNETT	●

SELECTMAN—3 YEARS VOTE FOR ONE	
KAREN SOTT	●

TREASURER—3 YEARS VOTE FOR ONE	
NATHAN D. ROBBINS	●

Town Ballot Warrant Articles	
ARTICLE 2: Multi-Family Reduced Frontage	YES
ARTICLE 3: Residential Open Space	YES
ARTICLE 4: Rte 125 setback adjustment; Details sketchy on why this is being done to only one small section of Route 125.	NO
ARTICLE 5: Road Bond, maintain town roads	YES
ARTICLE 6: Operating Budget—the Town is not the problem.	YES
ARTICLE 7: Town Hall Improvement Trust Fund—can do without this year.	YES
ARTICLE 8: Landfill Closure Fund—A worthy and appropriate investment	YES
ARTICLE 9: Add Library Employee	Your Call
ARTICLE 10: PT Employee—Town Clerk Off. With reservations. Prefer to not add to public payrolls at this time.	Your Call
ARTICLE 11: Police Contract—See page 6 for ERPGI commentary	Your Call
ARTICLE 12: 2 Police Cruisers—With reservations. Prefer one cruiser not two	YES
ARTICLE 13 Detective Cruiser—Would support except for two cruisers	NO
ARTICLE 14: Fire Dept. Pickup Truck—zero impact to tax rate—money from PSF Fund	YES
ARTICLE 15: Ambulance Power COT—zero impact to tax rate—money from PSF Fund	YES
Continued on next column →	

TOWN BALLOT (Continued)	
ARTICLE 16: Ambulance Auto Pulse—zero impact to tax rate —money from PSF Fund	YES
ARTICLE 17: Transfer Station Truck—Gather recycles from town and school buildings, plow transfer station, and stump dump.	YES
ARTICLE 18: EPT-TV: No impact to tax rate	YES
ARTICLE 19: Revolving Recreation Fund—intended to self-fund Recreation Department.	YES
ARTICLE 20: Recreation Dept Vehicle	NO
ARTICLE 21: Takes away your right to vote in the privacy of a voting booth on ALL town MONEY issues. Forces you to attend an open town meeting to vote on town spending issues.	NO !
ARTICLE 22: Youth Soccer	YES
ARTICLE 23: EYAA Donation	YES
ARTICLES 24: Paint Median Lines	NO
ARTICLE 25: Discontinue Capital Res. Funds	YES
ARTICLE 26: Discontinue Reval Cap Fund	YES
ARTICLE 27: Racetrack Amendment to allow serving of liquor at Selectmen’s discretion.	NO
ARTICLE 28: Amer. Red Cross Donation	NO
ARTICLE 29: Child & Fam. Svcs Donation	NO
ARTICLE 30: Rich MacFarland Ctr Donation	NO
ARTICLE 31: Ret. Senior Volunteer Prog	NO
ARTICLE 32: Meals on Wheels Donation	NO
ARTICLE 33: Seacoast Hospice Donation	NO
ARTICLE 34: Sexual Assault Serv. Donation	NO
ARTICLE 35: Re-align Railroad Avenue – Suspect request not limited to safety only	YES
School Ballot Warrant Articles	
ARTICLE 1: Teachers’ Contract—see ERPGI commentary page 7	Your Call
ARTICLE 2: Paraprofessional Contract—see ERPGI commentary page 6	Your Call
ARTICLE 3: School Budget—Although level funded, cuts were made to regular and vocational education to pay for costly admin. raises.	NO
ARTICLE 4: Takes away your right to vote in the privacy of the voting booth on ALL school MONEY issues. Will force your attendance at School District Meeting to vote ON school spending issues.	NO !