

# Tax Break Coincidences? Thoughts to Ponder

**Georgetown Selectman Lonnie Brennan**



Before you fall asleep, yes, the first part of this column is about taxes. And, yes, taxes and percentages and calculations can lead to snoring, but I promise you, there's a few interesting snippets to follow, so read forth in a sprit of adventure. There's a lot that goes into setting a property tax: assessors and consultants, data and numbers, and type of home, age, construction, neighborhood, type of cabinets, flooring, land, etc. Keep one thing in mind, however, town budgets grow every year, and the money comes from you.

Every year, groups in town want to expand services, feed the school system, etc. This increase gets passed onto you with tax increases for many, some reductions for others. It's all in the science of assessing. In the end, individuals might get whacked with increases, or even get reductions, but town-wide a 2 1/2 % increase on last year's tax levy gets imposed.

So some sad news this year for some residents. For example, if you wanted to pay lower taxes, be thankful you're not on the Finance Committee. These volunteers were hit with an average increase of almost 4%, and one board member got hit with a whopping 15% increase —with no changes, no remodeling, no work — just a nice old house in a nice neighborhood. Up went the tax bill. Next in line came the Board of Selectmen, with an average of 3.9% (one lucky member had just a 0.9% increase, yours truly got another 5.33% increase). Next came the School Committee with an average hit of 3.48%. But, drum roll please, there was some sunshine news for at least one board, the Board of Assessors, to be specific, whose members experienced a collective average increase of just 0.19%.

It all looks a lot clearer if you look at the tax chart nearby. The contrast is striking and the coincidence is amazing. While a large number of town officials got hit with increases, one member of the Board of Assessors saw a 4.85% decrease, another increased by a lucky 0.25%, though the new guy got hit with 5.15% increase. Better luck to him in future years.

The above numbers and chart were provided to the Board of Selectmen by member Matt Vincent, as part of some research he did to better understand Proposition 2 1/2 and its impact on individual homeowners. Matt shared his preliminary

data with the board, after a recent meeting for us to toss around the table and examine it. He had collected data on 200+ homes out of approximately 2,600, but even this small sampling was statistically interesting. We looked at the charts and Matt noted items of interest and stated that his study was preliminary and there are probably valid reasons for the spikes and valleys. He even theorized that there's probably a valid "calculus" that explains why one assessor's daughter's house received a 15% decrease this year, and that outside firms must have reasons for this.

So what are we to take from all of this? What does it mean when two similar houses, on the same street, built at the same time and of similar construction, when one house goes up 0.9%, and the other goes up 4.68%? What are we to think of the good fortune this year experienced by some? Perhaps it's just the coincidence of assessments — something with plausible and sensible reasons. Our town administrator's half-joking/perhaps half-serious initial response when asked what he thought of the numbers before us agreed with our perhaps rash comments: "from first look, it sure looks like the fix is in." Of course, to get a true response, he, like us, will need to look further at the numbers.

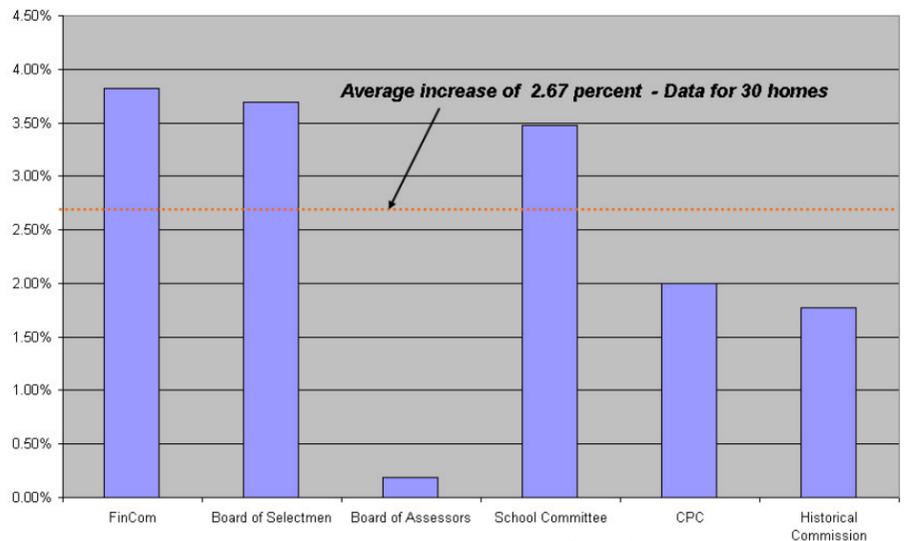
Well, since Matt's initial survey, we've rounded up data on many hundred more homes and have yet to find another 15% decrease, but we'll keep looking. There has got to be a few more rays of sunshine out there with folks reaping decreases after years of steady and perhaps seemingly unfair increases to their tax bills.

### Can You Hear Me Now? Firefighters Cut Off

I nearly fell out of my chair this past week when two members of our board of fire engineers informed the selectmen that the Fire Department's radio system is problematic, leaving areas of brown-outs and cut-outs and lack of communication in some areas of town. After some communication problems, they ordered a survey of the town, and confirmed the worst: little or no communication capability in certain areas of town. Up until this meeting, these areas of outages were unknown to the common citizen, and my colleagues joined me in rapidly moving to put a placeholder on the spring town meeting to address any funding needed to eliminate this potential safety hazard.

Can you imagine? Fighting a fire, or responding to a medical emergency, and needing to communicate, and trying the "can you hear me now" line and getting no reply? Our dedicated on-call firefighters

Georgetown Board Members - Percent Change, FY07 tax bill to FY08 tax bill



deserve the best in gear, and our neighbors deserve the best in safety protection regardless of what part of town they reside. The solution is currently estimated at \$55,000 to outfit the department with new gear.

For those paying attention, this safety hazard now hits the top of the list, side-by-side with the firefighters' and police chief's number one potential structural safety hazard in town, the Bailey Lane culvert crossing. Bailey Lane has been closed at its mid-point, after repeated warnings by our highway surveyor on the condition of the culvert/bridge's deck. Two attempts to reconstruct the two-foot high culvert and to raise the entire roadway and repave it from Taylor Street to West Main Street have not had the support of voters. In the meantime, the selectmen have asked to have nearly 14,000 pounds of concrete jersey barriers removed from the bridge and metal plates placed over the culvert to allow police cruisers to access the area until such time as voters allow full replacement of the bridge. How to get a fire truck across remains problematic. A third attempt at a warrant article will take place this spring, which, if successful this time, might allow full opening of the crossing to all by the end of the year. Two safety issues, communications and access for police vehicles, both need to have short-term and long-term solutions, yesterday. Speaking of Tax Revenue

The governor's estimated cherry sheet was published recently and it shows a paltry increase in state aid for non-school departments of just over \$35,000. So much for promises of local property tax relief.

### Senior Center for Georgetown?

Last week I put forth motions to do two things: First, establish a special gift fund with the sole purpose of establishing a fixed senior center in town. The second, to kickoff the fund with a request to town meeting to transfer a small sum of money into this

account from free cash. It will be a long journey, but right now, the virtual senior center takes place in two church halls and in two conference rooms at Town Hall. A vision and hope of many, the Board of Selectmen unanimously agreed to push forward with this project. It will take time, but the work begins now. Step forward and help out.

### Beware: Overrides are Forever

For those looking forward to the annual town meeting in May, the warrant is stacked with many items and placeholders for at least a few overrides. An override, for those still reading, is a permanent increase to your taxes. Something that will last forever. It is added to the base amount the town extracts from the community: all future calculations of Proposition 2 1/2 get based on the new, higher amount. So be careful campers. An override for one project empowers the town to jack up its revenue generators to a higher level year after year. Fortunately, we have a historically unique way of dealing with overrides in Georgetown. Put them before the voters (let the people vote), then just say no.

### Town Loses an Icon

Shoppers, merchants, office dwellers and travelers downtown stopped in reverence to witness the longest funeral procession through Georgetown Square in recent memory. Dana Lampert, who gave so much to so many, was called away from this world. His good thoughts and wishes, and family and bonds, continue to grow after him. A longtime member of the fire department, he received the highest of honors and respect from his fellow brothers and sisters in full uniform.

**Lonnie Brennan is a selectman in Georgetown, you can email him at [lonnie@thechocolatecellar.com](mailto:lonnie@thechocolatecellar.com).**

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## Georgetown:

**VOLUNTEER POSITIONS:**

- \* Moderator (appoints Finance Committee, runs Town Meetings)
- \* Assessor (helps set your tax rates and such)
- \* Housing Authority (think Trestle Way, affordable housing, etc.)
- \* Library Trustee (2 positions) (Peabody Library)
- \* Light Commissioner (your electric services)
- \* Planning Board (all development in town)
- \* School Committee (the schools)
- \* Water Commissioner (your water)

## Rurak: Parking Crisis in Haverhill: From Page 8

Now, to get all the extra spaces that downtown needs you repeat the magic. Stand on the corner at Mark's Deli. The road down to the parking lot behind the Lasting Room and Tap is steep. If we put the Riverwalk down below, it will not be handicap accessible by foot. Furthermore, driving up that ramp onto Washington Street is dangerous to cars and people. Imagine a level platform that goes out from the top of the ramp over the existing lot. The ramp down to the lower lot could be down by the river, so could a wheelchair ramp that made the Riverwalk accessible. This is multimodal too! Cars, bikes, wheelchairs and pedestrians all can use it. It makes the Riverwalk accessible. It improves public safety.

Now, imagine other sites throughout the downtown, perhaps behind Casey paper, perhaps at Locust and Essex, perhaps behind Haverhill Beef.

We could get all the extra spaces we know we need and we could distribute them to places where we most need them. One-story decks go up fast, they blend into, rather than destroy, the atmosphere around them. They are easier to maintain. Every place we put one between Washington/Merrimack Streets and the seawall could be an entry to our envisioned Riverwalk, so they are multi-transportation oriented. If there is a site that doesn't by itself meet that test, we could argue that it is part of an overall plan that makes more types of transit accessible to more people over the whole of the city.

Multiple sites for one-story decks make for a simple idea. Let's at least start talking about it, before we're all staring at a massive structure nobody likes.

**Jim Rurak is a professor at Boston College and is the former mayor of Haverhill. Email your comments or questions to Jim Rurak at [JARandKAS@comcast.net](mailto:JARandKAS@comcast.net).**

# Over-the-Counter Drugs Get Side-Effect Warnings

Dr. David Lipschitz

Recently the Food and Drug Administration announced that it will require warning labels describing the side effects of some of the most common over-the-counter medications. This brings positive and negative ramifications for American consumers.

It is vitally important that potential side effects be understood. On the other hand, it may lead to unnecessary fear and apprehension, causing people to stop taking medications. Regardless, make sure that you discuss all medications — prescribed and over the counter — with your physician to understand and avoid complications.

Tylenol, a trade name for the analgesic acetaminophen, is the safest and is a highly effective painkiller. However, recent newspaper reports indicated it might cause liver damage, a finding that caused many adults to stop taking the drug. What the reports did not say was that Tylenol could cause life-threatening liver damage only if taken in excess.

A dose of acetaminophen must never exceed 4 grams daily, or two extra-strength tablets four times daily. Some patients believe that if two is not helpful, why not take four or six at a time?

Sometimes patients take too much by mistake. For example, I have a patient who was taking eight Tylenol daily and eight generic acetaminophen daily, not realizing that they were the same medication. Even more insidious, many other medications include acetaminophen, including Darvocet (Darvon and acetaminophen), Lortab (hydrocodone and acetaminophen) and Ultracet (ultram and acetaminophen).

It is very important not to take eight Tylenol daily and also take six to 10 of another pain medication containing acetaminophen, as risk of liver damage will increase.

Many believe that the over-the-counter nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), including Motrin (ibuprofen) and Aleve (naproxen), are safer and more powerful than Tylenol. Not true! Many TV advertisements tout Aleve or

Motrin as being more powerful than Tylenol because one or two tablets of these drugs taken daily may be as good as two Tylenol four times a day.

However, at therapeutic doses, the risk of side effects of anti-inflammatories is greater than Tylenol.

Anti-inflammatories can damage the lining of the stomach, causing abdominal pain, indigestion and gastrointestinal bleeding.

These side effects led to the development of Vioxx and Celebrex, medications highly effective in controlling pain without damaging the stomach lining. Sadly, both these drugs, but most particularly Vioxx, increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Anti-inflammatories can also lead to high blood pressure, fluid retention and kidney damage.

Remember, any medication or substance that is used to relieve a particular symptom carries risks. Benadryl can cause depression, memory loss and risk of falling. Pepcid AC can cause dizziness, nausea, vomiting, constipation and diarrhea. Prilosec can cause dizziness, nausea, vomiting, potential risk of gastric cancer and hip fractures.

A similar warning must be made for all alternate remedies, including Saint John's Wort, ginkgo biloba, saw palmetto and many others. If it has an effect on a bodily function, it acts as a drug. Potential benefits always come with risks. A decision to use any remedy must be taken very seriously.

So, with all this information, should you avoid over-the-counter pain pills completely? The answer is obviously no. The question is not whether you take the medication, but rather how you take it. Make sure you understand the benefits and potential harm. And if you are on any prescription medications, remember that over-the-counter and alternate remedies may interact with prescription drugs, making them less or more effective or increasing the risk of side effects.

Before taking any medication, read the instructions very carefully. Never exceed the maximum recommended dose

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Dr. David Lipschitz

and make sure that your doctor is aware of every pill you are taking. If you are about to buy an over-the-counter medication and are on prescription medications, your pharmacist should always be consulted. He will be able to counsel you on potential drug interactions and side effects and assure that you are not taking an incorrect dose.

By being careful and educated you can safely take medications to relieve minor symptoms. But, always do so with caution and make sure you clearly understand the potential ramifications.

Dr. David Lipschitz is the author of the book "Breaking the Rules of Aging." To find out more about Dr. David Lipschitz, and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at [www.creators.com](http://www.creators.com). Dr. David Lipschitz' e-mail address is [askdrdavid@msn.com](mailto:askdrdavid@msn.com). More information is available at [www.drdauidhealth.com](http://www.drdauidhealth.com).

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## Merrimack Valley Hospice Awarded Funding for Innovative Children's Palliative Care Program

Lawrence, Mass. — Merrimack Valley Hospice is pleased to announce the beginning of a very special new program of supportive services for children with life limiting illness and their families. The Hospice & Palliative Care Federation of Massachusetts recently named Merrimack Valley Hospice a provider of their new Pediatric Palliative Care Program.

The Pediatric Palliative Care Program is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and was established as part of the Health Care Reform legislation. The unique program will add important services to supplement care already being provided by a home health agency when there is an opportunity to improve the quality of life for the child and family. Merrimack Valley Hospice has been awarded funding to provide services designed to help address the unmet physical, emotional, social or spiritual needs of the child and family. The agency may provide assessment or consultation for pain and symptom management, patient or sibling counseling, social services, spiritual care, respite care, volunteer support and bereavement care. Expressive therapies are also available to help children and families cope with the stress of illness.

"We are honored to be a provider for this very important program," said Joan Stygles Hull, RN, MBA, President / CEO of the Home Health Foundation which includes Merrimack Valley Hospice, Home Health VNA and HomeCare, Inc. "This

program is an essential step in addressing the comprehensive needs of a patient and family who are struggling with a complex illness. This program supports the family's ability to care for their child in the familiarity of their home."

Merrimack Valley Hospice is one of only ten hospices in the state selected by DPH on the basis of quality of care to provide this new service. The program is free of charge, and referrals can be made by anyone, including, but not limited to, physicians, social workers, caregivers, parents and family members. Merrimack Valley Hospice will offer consultations with staff members, including Medical Director Dr. Jennifer Reidy, who completed her fellowship in Palliative Care at the San Diego Hospice and Palliative Care.

"Dr. Reidy and our staff are excellent resource for families dealing with chronic health issues," said Hull. "We can offer these children and families a better quality of life as they care for their child."

This program is going to help children with a wide range of illnesses. Merrimack Valley Hospice will be assisting families who are facing advanced cancers, HIV, cystic fibrosis, and many other illnesses that can limit normal life expectancy.

The Pediatric Palliative Care Program differs from traditional hospice services because it does not require a six-month



The Merrimack Valley Striders recently presented a check for \$3,300 to Merrimack Valley Hospice. The agency gave the club a plaque thanking them for their efforts. Pictured here with Pat Palermo, Vice President of External Relations for Merrimack Valley Hospice, are members of the running club: (l-r) Billy Sheehan, Pat, Al Pappalardo and Tom Licciardello.

prognosis; curative treatments can be continued and the family does not need to discontinue the services of other providers. It provides hospice-based services without the restrictions of traditional hospice care.

Merrimack Valley Hospice is a not-for-profit agency dedicated to providing services to terminally ill patients and their families. The agency is affiliated with Home Health VNA and HomeCare, Inc.

Together, the three agencies serve more than 80 communities throughout the Merrimack Valley and Southern New Hampshire from their offices in Lawrence, Chelmsford, Peabody, Haverhill and Newburyport. Visit them on the web at [www.merrimackvalleyhospice.org](http://www.merrimackvalleyhospice.org). To learn more about this innovative program, contact Merrimack Valley Hospice at 800-475-8335.

# Happiness Is a Moral Obligation

Dennis Prager

For much of my life, I, like most people, regarded the pursuit of happiness as largely a selfish pursuit. One of the great revelations of middle age has been that happiness, far from being only a selfish pursuit, is a moral demand.



When we think of character traits we rightly think of honesty, integrity, moral courage, and acts of altruism. Few people include happiness in any list of character traits or moral achievements.

But happiness is both. Happiness — or at least acting happy, or at the very least not inflicting one's unhappiness on others — is no less important in making the world better than any other human trait.

With some exceptions, happy people make the world better and unhappy people make it worse. This is true on the personal (micro) and global (macro) planes.

On the micro plane:

Consider the effects of an unhappy parent on a child. Ask people raised by an unhappy parent if that unhappiness hurt them.

Consider the effects of an unhappy spouse on a marriage.

Consider the effects of unhappy children on their parents. I know a couple that has four middle-aged children of whom three are truly extraordinary people, inordinately well adjusted and decent. The fourth child has been unhappy most of his life and has been a never-ending source of pain to the parents. That one child's unhappiness has always overshadowed the joy that the parents experience from the other three children. Hence the saying that one is no happier than one's least happy child.

Consider the effects of a brooding co-worker on your and your fellow workers' morale — not to mention the huge difference between working for a happy or a moody employer. We should regard bad moods as we do offensive body odor. Just as we shower each day so as not to inflict our body odors on others, so we should monitor our bad moods so as not to inflict them on others. We shower partly for ourselves and partly out of obligation to others. The same should hold true vis a vis moods; and just as we avoid those who do not do something about their body odor we should avoid whenever possible those who do nothing about their bad moods.

The flip side of the damage unhappy people do when they subject others to their unhappiness is the good that people do when they are, or at least act, happy. Just think of how much more you want to help people when you are in particularly happy mood and you realize how much more good the happy are likely to do.

On the macro plane, the case for the relationship between happiness and goodness is as apparent.

It is safe to say that the happiest Germans were not those who joined the Nazi Party. Nor did the happiest Europeans become Communists. And happy Muslims are not generally among those who extol death. The motto of Hamas and other Islamic groups engaged in terror, "We love death as much as [Americans, Jews] love life," does not appeal to happy Muslims.

Cults, hysteria and mass movements all appeal to the unhappy far more than to the happy. It is one more example of the genius of America's Founders to include "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" in the Declaration of Independence. No other major civilization so enshrined happiness as a core value. This American belief in the moral and societal merit in pursuing happiness is a major reason America has developed differently than Europe. The American emphasis on happiness is one reason no fanatical political or religious movement, Left or Right, has been able to succeed in America as such movements have repeatedly succeeded in Europe.

The pursuit of happiness is not the pursuit of pleasure. The pursuit of pleasure is hedonism, and hedonists are not happy because the intensity and amount of pleasure must constantly be increased in order for hedonism to work.

Pleasure for the hedonist is a drug. But the pursuit of happiness is noble. It benefits everyone around the individual pursuing it, and it benefits humanity. And that is why happiness is a moral obligation.

**Dennis Prager hosts a nationally syndicated radio talk show in Los Angeles. He is the author of four books, His Web site is [www.prageradio.com](http://www.prageradio.com). COPYRIGHT 2007 CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC.**

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## Making Adult Literacy Count Network Looks for a Hole in One

For a golfer, it's never too early to think about spring. On Monday, June 18<sup>th</sup> at 8 AM, the Methuen Community Network hopes that at least 144 golfers- double the number from last year- will tee off at the Merrimack Golf Course in Methuen for the second annual Golf Tournament in support of adult education in Methuen. Themed "Making Adult Literacy Count," the tournament goal is to raise the \$20,000 needed to sponsor additional evening classes of English as a Second Language at the Methuen Adult Learning Center (MALC) for area residents.



MALC administers classes to over 200 residents a year. Yet over 250 are still on waiting lists. "I can't do anything here until I learn English," says Hilario, an immigrant from West Africa. "I need a good job. My children need to eat." Area businesses are stepping up to the tee, providing numerous raffle prizes, sponsoring tees and holes, and even paying for foursomes to participate. One lucky golfer will win the grand-prize if he or she can manage a hole-in-one. Other prizes wait for the longest drive and closest to the pin.



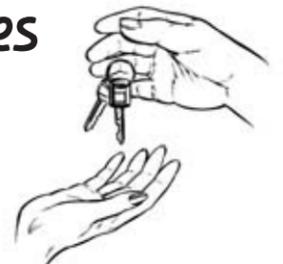
Anyone interested in participating in the tournament, or otherwise getting involved, should call Dr. Shirley Callan, Program Director, at (978) 681-1347.

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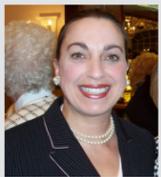
Classes run 5:30pm-8:30pm

Age requirement for classroom is 15 YEARS, 9 MONTHS

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- \* Training vehicles are 2006 Honda Accords

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**Methuen News**  
**Kathleen Corey Rahme**  
 Methuen City Council, At-Large, Methuen Youth Corps Founder

## Your Community Television

When the crew from Methuen Community Television's *Call to Serve* formed back in the winter of 2003 to create a show about the oral histories of local veterans, no one could have imagined that it would still be going strong in 2007. We are about to record our 50th show! If you are ever wondering about the value of, or the impact of, local access television, just ask the crew. Or better yet, ask the fifty, veteran guests and their families about what the experience has meant to them.

"There isn't a better example of community involvement that community television," says Karen Hayden, Executive Director of MCTV. People can directly impact their neighbors by creating their own shows or by recording events in the community. "*Call to Serve* is just another way the medium can be used to give our veterans the opportunity to talk about their experiences while defending our freedom. It is a powerful thing," says Hayden. This is all possible because of the wonderful

volunteers willing to utilize the free training provided at MCTV. But this all could change.

Currently, there is a bill known as **An Act Promoting Consumer Choice and Competition for Cable Service**, sponsored by Sen. Steven Panagiotakos of Lowell. It is being promoted to encourage consumer choice and competition. The opposite could actually result. If passed, it will change community access television as we know it. Some of the changes would result in the elimination of, the existing cable law MGL c. 166A. If you would like details about the proposal, check it out at [www.massaccess.org/PublicPolicy.html](http://www.massaccess.org/PublicPolicy.html).

Basically, because public access is not a public utility, it is subject to the user fees you see on your cable bill. It must rent the fiber space. These fees are used to help pay for the wonderful, local programming you enjoy on MCTV. According to Hayden, "no one is questioning whether there should be competition for cable television services, but rather what we are willing to give up for the competition." Hayden is convinced that we should not have to give up anything. She feels that legitimate competitors can obtain licensing right now. The proposed legislation will attack our local television station and their ability to provide programming like high school sports, community events, municipal meetings and programs like *Call to Serve*. "If we give this up,



Father and son volunteers Paul and Joe Clover at the MCTV control room



This CTS (*Call to Serve*) photo is the crew during the 40th show anniversary featuring Bruce Arnold as the guest veteran. Seated: Kathleen Corey Rahme and Bruce Arnold. Back row: Paul Clover, Joe Clover, Paul Perrone, Bruce Wilson, Ed Curran, Mike Beshara, Corinne LaCharitie, and Al Grant.

what could possibly replace it?" asked Hayden.

As we approach our 50th show, I am thinking about the invaluable experiences our crew and participants have enjoyed, as well as the unquestionable impact this program has made. I would like to thank and acknowledge the crew because without whom none of this would be possible. Thank you to Al Grant, Corinne LaCharite, Paul Clover, Joe Clover, Bruce Wilson, Mike Beshara, Ed Curran, Jack Dorsey, and all the extra volunteers like Tom Gradzewicz, Paul Perrone, Rosa Croughwell, Christine Ryan, Marie Rahme and Michael Rahme.

The guests should also be acknowledged for without them, there would be no *Call to Serve*. They are Michael Beshara, Edmond Solomon, Louise Shea Flynn, Sara Payne Hayden, Domenic Stella, Andrew Bernard, Joseph Lovoi, Luthur McIlwain, Ray Cormier, Alfred Bruno, Bill Broderick, Winifred Medauer, Fred Kuehn, Joseph Messina, Arthur Wyman, Tom Petrillo, Joseph Drelick,

Marco Derrico, Sylvio Uliano, Herbert Hynes, Judy Schadlick, John Caro, Harvey Gibeau, Jim Oliveri, Bill O'Connor, Stanley Podbeilski, Connie Grew, Michael Buglione,

Buddy Keyes, Richard Kiessling, George Dyer, George Sargent, Sam DiNoto, Ed Sidon, Sid Wagner, Anthony Marchese, Charles Boddy, Bruce Arnold, Al Grant, Paul Clover, Charles Bruderer, Raymond DiFiore, Richard Henrick, Joseph Bella, Paul Perrone, John DiSalvo, Arthur Mansor, Paul Frechette, Angus MacPherson, and Ed Curran.

The show actually placed third in the Alliance for Community Media Awards in 2004. It follows the guidelines of the Library of Congress' Veterans' History Project. The shows are archived in the Library of Congress. "When a veteran thanks you for your service to the community, you know you are doing something important," says Hayden referring to *Call to Serve*. This show continues to inspire all who view it. It tells the stories of the people you know, or think you know. It tells the stories of your neighbors, your mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles, sisters and brothers. It puts a face on all those who answered the 'call to serve.'

Methuen City Councilor, Vice Chair, Councilor At Large, Methuen Youth Corps, Founder (978) 686-0008 home or (978)387-2963 cell [http://www.ci.methuen.ma.us/Council/council\\_members/rahme.htm](http://www.ci.methuen.ma.us/Council/council_members/rahme.htm). You can email her at [kcoryerahme@comcast.net](mailto:kcoryerahme@comcast.net)

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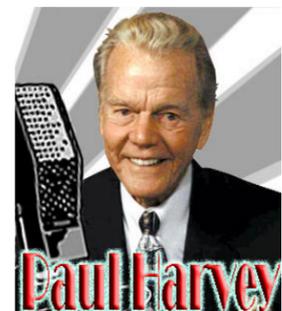
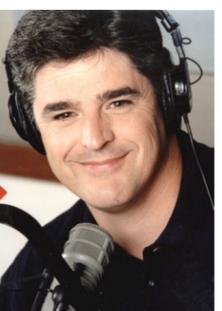


## Boston Conservative Talk 1150 WTTT

**Boston Conservative Talk - 1150 WTTT's weekday schedule**

5AM - 6AM "Wall Street Journal This Morning" w/Gordon Deal

### Boston's Conservative Afternoon Lineup

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| 6AM - 9AM<br>Bill Bennett  | 9AM, 11:45AM, 6PM<br>Paul Harvey  | 9AM - 12N<br>Mike Gallagher   | 12N - 3PM<br>Dennis Prager   | 3PM - 6PM<br>Sean Hannity   | 6PM - 9PM<br>Hugh Hewitt  | 9PM - 12AM<br>Michael Medved  |

# Newly Filed Legislation Will Help the City of Methuen

Ken Willette, Methuen City Council

I recently filed legislation before the Methuen City Council mandating that we receive the same informational packet that the Community Development Board is provided prior to any joint public hearing to discuss major rezoning initiatives. The resolution, which passed overwhelmingly by a vote of 8 to 1 during the first reading, was recently scheduled for a workshop. Since the duly elected council is charged with approving major rezoning measures, which have long-lasting implications on overall quality-of-life for neighbors and taxpayers alike, it makes sense to keep our legislative body in the loop.



benefit our economic rivals in Salem, N.H., especially at the expense of mom-and-pop stores in Methuen. But any rezoning issue is a non-starter in my book when I have not received the proper background packet in order to render an intelligent and constructive decision on behalf of my constituents. We must resolve as many lingering problems affiliated with a proposed project as possible before final rezoning approval is reached. Even during preliminary stages of the rezoning process, the lines of communication between a developer and the Methuen City Council must be open, inclusive and transparent in order to address ancillary issues before they fester.

Speaking of the importance of being informed, what a great victory the residents of Forest Street achieved by defeating a proposed 40R district in their neighborhood. I was approached by a number of residents with their legitimate concerns about the approval of 35-40 housing units on a mere six acres of land. To their collective credit, they mobilized the troops, contacted their district and at-large councilors, spoke at the public hearing at the Searles Building, and never wavered in their opposition.

The developer has since removed the possibility of a 40R district on Forest Street, and is seriously considering scaling back the total number and density of housing units. Again, kudos to the Forest Street area residents for their unity.

Ken Willette is an at-large city councilor in Methuen. You can email him at [kennethwillette@comcast.net](mailto:kennethwillette@comcast.net)

As many people have readily confirmed over the years, timely information is a powerful tool to level the playing field and ensure good faith options for both elected officials and citizens at large. Before this resolution was offered, councilors only received the legal language authorizing a zoning amendment and a map, which revealed little, if any, information regarding the true intentions of the developer.

This absence of concrete information was clearly apparent at the recent joint public hearing to analyze the proposed Lowe's site, straddling both Salem, N.H. and Methuen. City councilors were left in the dark about the corporate interest of Lowe's to locate a store on Route 28, the likely presence of delivery trucks during non-operational hours and the adverse impact of expanded traffic on secondary roads in the immediate vicinity.

I am automatically very leery of approving any zoning change that would directly

# Patience Needed With Teen Drivers

Debbie Quinn, Methuen City Councilor

According to figures from the Registry of Motor Vehicles, 32 percent of all 16-year-old drivers will be in a serious car accident.



The numbers decline slightly as youngsters get older: 17 percent of 17-year-olds and 13 percent of 18-year-olds. Statistically, teenage drivers are involved in a very high percentage of car accidents each year.

Because of these statistics, first-time teen drivers should get all the practice they can before getting behind the wheel of a car. Driver education and training will help to make kids safer drivers but anything we can do beyond that will only be a plus.

Anyone who's taught a 16 year old how to drive knows full well how stressful it can be for both the teen driver and the adult.

Add to that fact that people these days are so rushed and sometimes doing several other tasks while sitting behind the wheel and it can be a dangerous situation. I must admit not all kids are nervous drivers and not all parents are nervous teachers, but indulge me for a moment.

Parking, busy streets, highways, on and off ramps, are just a few of the dangerous obstacles teen drivers face. Not to mention the added element of irate drivers with their hands on the horn or worse, cutting off the young inexperienced drivers in a fit of road rage.

This experience may be very traumatic, for both parent and student driver.

Now, I know what your thinking, these people are just plain rude and probably will not adhere to any street signs or road rules, there's noting you can do about them.

That may be the case, but these people who are in such a hurry, simply not thinking of who's in the car ahead of them, are still a danger to young drivers and they have to know how to handle situations where the other driver is causing a problem on the road.

Then there are those who want to drive around with tinted windows. For these people who say 'we don't want undesirables to see whose in the car,' I say, there is a law against tinted windows. The law is there so that anyone can look in the window to see who's driving,

and if it is underage teen it is important to see that they are with an adult and not driving alone.

There is a voluntary program for parents and student drivers in the city of Methuen. A pilot program co-ordinated with the Police Department, Mayor Manzi, Methuen Auto School, and myself. My hope is to find funds via donations so that we may distribute magnets that alert drivers on the road of who is an underage driver. The magnets are free of cost. Give them a try. Any safety precautions we can take for our younger drivers are well worth it

For the past two years the Police Department and the auto school have worked together to educate new drivers and to try and educate experienced drivers on the need to give new drivers some slack and the need to exercise patience on the road.

We have found that most of the time the drivers are not intentionally tailgating they tend to just be in a rush and are inattentive to their surroundings.

The student driver magnet program is a way to advise other drivers that a new driver is operating the car and to remind them to give this person a chance.

The magnet design is similar to the "schools open" and school bus bumper stickers. These stickers have worked well when it comes to reminding drivers to use caution and we expect the same success from these magnets.

Debbie Quinn is a West End District city councilor in Methuen. She is in her first term and can be reached at [drq270@yahoo.com](mailto:drq270@yahoo.com)

Hi, I'm Kathy Mamos  
I'm a Member of  
**Team Zingales**  
360 Merrimack Street, Bldg. #5 in Lawrence  
Please see our ad on Page 30

## The 5th Annual 'Original' Taste of Methuen

Wyndham Hotel,  
123 Old River Road,  
in Andover,  
April 3rd, from 6-9pm.

Great Food,  
One Location,  
One Low Price

(Tickets are \$20.00 each and can be purchased in advance by calling Ken Willette Jr. at (978) 683-0606 or Mike Condon at (978) 689-8263

# Come Laugh at Mayor Bill Manzi

## 2nd Annual St. Patrick's Day Luncheon

Friday, March 9th - 12:30pm-3pm  
Guesthouse Suites  
159 Pelham St. Methuen  
Tickets \$35 per person

Michael Condon's Famous Corned Beef & Cabbage

Excerpts  
from

# Methuen Mayor William M. Manzi III's 2007 State Of The City Address

Let me begin by thanking Nancy Carace and The Methuen Board of Trade for hosting this great event again this year. The Methuen Board of Trade excels in bringing the business community together, and this year's larger-scaled event is proof positive that the Board's important mission is being fulfilled.

This is my second year addressing this body, and I have much to report by way of progress. Last year, I laid out an aggressive list of priorities. I would like to begin by briefly outlining the accomplishments that we as a city have made this past year.

## Economic Development

Shortly after taking office, I realized that several departments were in need of reorganization in order for the city to run more efficiently. My first step was to reorganize the Office of Economic and Community Development. We took a department that had been split in two and eliminated a department head position, consolidating line authority in one position: the Director of Economic and Community Development.

Methuen was fortunate to be able to hire from the private sector Karen Sawyer to fill this position. We hired a new land use planner, Kathleen Colwell, and embarked, under Karen Sawyer's leadership, upon a comprehensive master planning process. This process has brought together city employees, residents, business leaders and other stakeholders. We are confident that Methuen will finally have a comprehensive Master Plan by this April.

## Veterans

With so many of the city's service people stationed overseas, it was time to make a new commitment to the city's veterans. With the help of Methuen's Veterans' Services Director, Ed "Hoppy" Curran, I was able to move the Veterans Department to larger, more accessible office space. We also hired new staff to serve our ever-increasing veterans population. In December, the city hosted a welcome home night for returning service men and women. I was touched by the number of people who attended and proud of what our military families have accomplished. We pray that this year many more will be returning home safely.

## Six Mayoral Commissions

In addition to departmental reorganization, last year I was pleased to develop and announce the creation of six new mayoral commissions. These commissions are comprised of citizens who are passionate about their community. They are taking on several important causes such as fire protection, historic preservation, regulatory relief and energy efficiency.

We were also able to update and re-launch the city's website. The new website is more informative and user-friendly. With all of the city's forms, meeting information, assessment information and ordinances in one convenient place, the Methuen city website now provides one-stop-shopping for residents and businesses. And it doesn't end there. This year we are working to make all city forms interactive, so that information can be submitted electronically to the city clerk or other departments.

## Collecting Taxes

We are always looking for new and innovative ways to raise funds in order to lessen the burden on the taxpayer. Last year, with the help of city Treasurer Ann

## 2007 Methuen Board of Trade Dinner

***"Many citizens have weighed in on the need for cable competition in Methuen. I believe that having more than one cable provider may lead to lower rates, better service and ultimately more choice. I am pleased to report that I have directed my Chief of Staff, Matt Kraunelis, to begin franchising negotiations with Verizon and am confident that they will begin providing services to Methuen residents this year."***



Guastafarro, we were able to raise 1.5 million dollars from the sale of surplus city property. That money went to offset taxes for residents and businesses.

Our treasurer has also been exceedingly vigilant in collecting back and overdue taxes due to the city. Before we ask more of our citizens, it is vital that we collect all of the monies owed and spend that money responsibly. Beyond vigilant tax collection, we were also able to collect impact fees from large businesses desiring to relocate to Methuen. In some quarters those fees have been controversial, but they are a necessary tool that, when used properly, can mitigate some adverse impacts on our citizens.

While the property tax remains the primary funding source for cities and towns, it would be almost impossible to fund the type of mitigation that some economic development requires. Again, done properly and honestly, these fees can help us to impact positively the quality of life for Methuen's residents. On that basis we will continue to look for better ways to derive revenue from sources other than traditional fees, fines and property taxes.

## Education

Over the past few years, I have listened to many parents and students express their concerns about Methuen's educational system. A constant complaint was that Methuen High School's open concept was not a conducive learning environment. With the help of many education professionals and leaders, a statement of interest to renovate the high school was drafted and submitted to the state school building School Building Authority. We are hopeful that this summer, Methuen will receive a financial commitment from the Commonwealth, and the high school renovation process will be underway.

## Methuen's Economy

There are several critical initiatives and projects that commenced in 2006 and will come to fruition this year. We are looking forward to the opening of the new Mann Orchards Farm Store and the new Target on Pleasant Valley Street.

A traffic study will soon begin in that area and we are committed to making the needed

improvements to the roads and infrastructure of that area. Road improvements will also be made to the Pelham Street/Interstate 93 interchange this year. Pelham Street is fast becoming a commercial corridor with Southern New Hampshire Bank, Irving's Blue Canoe retail outlet, and an FW Webb warehouse planned. In other areas of Methuen, Enterprise Bank has committed to bring a branch to Methuen in our historic district, CVS has opened a new mega-store in our historic district that has a beautiful design, and we are working with the Fisichelli family to redesign the in-town mall in conjunction with the approved improvement of the Redmond House, which is also in our historic district.

These projects prove that historic preservation need not be a disincentive to good economic development. We will continue to work in this area to bring needed change to our downtown area while maintaining sensible regulation that preserves our rich historic heritage.

## New Fire Station

In 1918, a young pitcher named Babe Ruth led the Boston Red Sox to the World Series Championship. That same year, Methuen's East End Fire Station was opened. Now, because the structure is undersized and outdated, we are looking for ways to build a new station. It is important that the East End retain a fire station. To close it outright would have an adverse effect on emergency response times and fire suppression. A team of citizens and fire prevention experts are studying the problem, and I expect their recommendations this year as well.

Although economic development, adequate public facilities and financial stability are important topics, I know that many Methuen citizens are equally concerned about so-called "quality of life issues." To that end, I find it important to balance the city's policy agenda with matters that are vital to the quality of life of our citizens. Last year, we were able to secure state funds in the amount of \$250,000 for the revitalization of the former Bea's property on the Merrimack River. A new commission chaired by City Councilor Deborah Quinn is currently studying ways to make the needed improvements.

And this year, we will see the construction of a new community center in Methuen's Arlington Neighborhood. The community center will house after-school homework programs, the Women, Infants and Children program, and many activities aimed at the neighborhood's young people. My thanks to the Methuen Arlington Neighborhood, who have worked so hard to improve their neighborhood and bring this project to fruition.

This project, so vital to the Arlington Neighborhood, brings me back to the school department for just a minute. Working with Dr. Whitten and the Tenney School Principal Jim Giuca, we will explore ways to get our school department more actively involved in the great programs already under way in this neighborhood. Involving our school system is a natural progression, and a further example of Dr. Whitten's dynamic leadership.

## Parks & Playgrounds

The year 2007 will also find us working hard to renovate many of Methuen's parks and playgrounds. We have again requested that the commonwealth assist us financially in this endeavor and I have already spoken to Senator Baddour and Methuen's state representatives, Linda Dean Campbell and Barbara L'Italien, about the importance of these projects. I would like to speak to the great leadership that is provided to Methuen by our legislative delegation.

Steve, Linda and Barbara have done great work for our city, and I look forward to continued partnership with them this year. My thanks to former Representative Arthur Broadhurst, who worked so hard with Senator Baddour and Rep. L'Italien to deliver the Bea's money and the \$50,000 to repair our senior center roof. I am also grateful for the hard work of our great City Council under the leadership of Council President Steven Zanni.

## Cable

Many citizens have weighed in on the need for cable competition in Methuen. I believe that having more than one cable provider may lead to lower rates, better service and ultimately more choice. I am pleased to report that I have directed my chief of staff, Matt Kraunelis, to begin franchising negotiations with Verizon and am confident that they will begin providing services to Methuen residents this year.

My main goal in these negotiations is to make sure that citizens retain access to local programming, and will continue to receive valuable information from Methuen's local TV stations while producing fast track licensing that avoids placing bureaucratic obstacles in the path of success.

In closing, if I had to characterize 2007 in one sentence, I would say that it is going to be a year of results. So much of what we have started in 2006 will come to fruition this year. I look forward to working with citizens and business people alike on the critical initiatives that I have outlined here today.

Make no mistake about it, this year will hold many challenges as well, but I can assure you that I will continue to meet them head on with diligence and composure. Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to report that the state of our city is robust. With your help and support this year, I am confident that we can make it even better in the years to come.

Thank you.

*Methuen Exchange Club Presents*

# The 'Original' Taste of Methuen Event - April 3rd

There is no question that the Merrimack Valley is one of the richest regions in the country when it comes to a variety of foods and restaurants.

Each year the Methuen Exchange Club hosts an event called the "Original" Taste of Methuen where local restaurants and eateries from around the Valley showcase the best food dishes you will ever taste.

The Methuen Exchange Club President-Elect Ken Willette recently announced the "Original" Taste of Methuen will host their 5th annual fundraiser at the Wyndham Hotel, at 123 Old River Road in Andover, on April 3rd, from 6-9 p.m. (Tickets are \$20.00 each and can be purchased in advance by calling Ken Willette Jr. at 978-683-0606.)

This year's co-chairs for the "Original" Taste of Methuen will be Ken Willette Jr. and Arthur Hutton.

The event is being held at the spacious Wyndham Hotel in Andover this year because The Exchange Club of Methuen unanimously decided that the Guesthouse Suites was simply too small to accommodate the hundreds of people who attend. "Each year this event gets bigger and bigger," said Ken Willette. "Guesthouse Suites exceeded the capacity last year and since the fundraiser has truly grown into a regional event, we needed to find a place that could hold everyone."

"In 2006 we had a packed house with over 500 people from all across the Merrimack Valley and Southern New Hampshire. We needed a much larger location capable of handling the tremendous growth of the Taste, which has exceeded our wildest dreams and expectations."

The Methuen Exchange Club's charity account directly benefits the deserving children of the Saint Anne's Home and the Methuen Arlington Neighborhood.

It contributes to the "Toys for Tots" program, helps veterans groups, and supports child abuse prevention projects across the region.



Borelli's Deli on Merrimack St., Methuen was named "Best Restaurant, 2006" by The Valley Patriot food critics during last year's "Original" Taste of Methuen event. This year the Taste of Methuen is being held at the Wyndham Hotel in Andover and our food critics will be on the prowl.

The "Original" Taste of Methuen is a win-win situation for businesses because area restaurants and eateries are able to showcase their signature dishes to hundreds of new customers. People sample a variety of food items from 20 vendors at one event for an affordable price, and the Exchange Club's charity account can be replenished.

There is still an opportunity for restaurants to sign up for the event, and for the area businesses to donate raffle prizes or simply make an outright donation to The Methuen Exchange Club. All businesses will receive recognition at

the event. "We encourage all businesses to join us, as they will be able to reach out to hundreds of people from across the Merrimack Valley, and help a great charity at the same time," concluded Ken Willette Jr.

Any interested restaurant or business should contact Mike Condon at (978) 689-8263



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# Notes From The Statehouse

## Methuen State Rep. Linda Dean Campbell

One thought to pass on to you before you begin reading a piece written by a freshman legislator, is that any freshman comments regarding the "inner" workings of Beacon Hill should be considered with a bit of skepticism and a sense of humor!



improvements in our infrastructure which include improvements in both public and private transportation systems; a more robust telecommunications capability; and more affordable housing for employees. A streamlined permitting process is the final critical

link that has been aggressively addressed by both the current and former Governor. In sum, don't be misled by the issue of closing loopholes on 4% of corporations which do business in the Commonwealth – the states that we are competing with have already done that. Instead we need to focus upon the above challenges which will define how we are able to compete in an international marketplace.

My focus right now is to meet with all of the stakeholders in Methuen that have an interest in the state budget. My thanks to all of them for their advice and support. Our meetings in Boston and Methuen have been most productive. My weekly meetings with Mayor Manzi and his Chief of Staff, Attorney Matthew Kraunelis, are most important as we continue to analyze the details of the Governor's Budget.

For the foreseeable future, I can be reached in Room 33 of the State House. My legislative aide, Christopher Dwelley, and I, welcome your visits and calls.

We may be reached by calling (617) 722-2060. My email at the State House is: Linda.Dean-Campbell@MassMail.State.MA.US and Christopher's email address is: Christopher.Dwelley@MassMail.State.MA.US You are also welcome to contact me at my residence: (987.989.0722) campbellmethuen@comcast.net

Of all the issues raised in the previous campaigns, I believe the most important is the immediate need to bring employers to Massachusetts. One thing that we need to keep in mind as we move forward is that 39 states in our nation have steeper business tax rates than we do in the Commonwealth. Targeting the 4% of corporations in the state that are using loopholes to avoid paying taxes is not going to affect whether or not small businesses or corporate entities remain here – or relocate. So, what is needed to convince future small businesses and corporations to come and stay in Massachusetts? We need to make

the event at St. Monica's School on Lawrence St. to a packed room of interested Middle Eastern cooking aspirants who were, by definition, "mystified" by Middle Eastern cuisine. Rahme held



## Demystifying Middle Eastern Cuisine

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**SUPPORT THE TROOPS!**  
**SUPPORT THE MISSION**  
**Victory in Iraq Means a Safer America**

## Methuen Board of Trade Offers Scholarships



The Methuen Board of Trade announces its annual scholarship program. Each year the Board awards several scholarships to Methuen residents who will be attending schools of higher education in the coming year. Any Methuen resident who plans to enter college in the fall may apply, regardless of the high school he/she is now attending.

In addition, non-residents attending a Methuen school will also be considered. Applications are available at the guidance departments of the local high schools, or may be picked up at the Nevins Memorial Library, 305 Broadway, Methuen. Awards will be based on many factors, including academic achievement, extracurricular activities, leadership, financial need, and other demonstrated skills and talents. Applications are due by April 6, 2006.

For more information, call Colleen Carney, chair of the Scholarship Committee, at 978-807-5359.

## Methuen Cited for Its Commitment to Open Government

Non-Partisan Government Watch Group Credits City's Informative Website

The Massachusetts Campaign for Open Government (maopengov.org), a project of the non-partisan group Common Cause, issued a report last year calling for increased Internet access to important government public records. As part of this initiative, the group examined the Internet presence of all 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts to learn whether they post essential information in six major categories. The group found that of the 311 communities that maintain websites, only 41 maintain all of the essential documents. Common Cause announced this week that Methuen was one of the few communities whose websites contained all of the items on their list. The group extended its congratulations to Methuen for its work in informing citizens

and in maintaining an up-to-date website. Methuen was the only Merrimack Valley community to receive this recognition.

Methuen will be honored at an event at the State House on Thursday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, at 1 p.m., in Nurse's Hall. The event falls during "Sunshine Week" when media outlets throughout the country focus on issues of open government. "It is an honor to be recognized by the Campaign for Open Government," said Methuen Mayor William M. Manzi, III. "In Methuen, we strive to make government open and accessible to all of our citizens and this proves that our efforts are effective." Manzi stated that he will continue to look for ways to expand open government and thanked Common Cause for its recognition.

## Merrimack Valley School of Hair Design

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# Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics: From Page 15

## Reasons to Vote YES for a New High School

### 1. We need the room for 50% more students by 2005.

The existing building is already overcrowded and we know that we need the capacity for 50% more students by 2005 because those future high school students are already in the school system at the elementary level. By 2005 the high school will have about 1500 students. 1999-2000 enrollment is around 1000.

### 2. It solves ALL of the problems.

When it comes to our town's future, it makes sense to do things right the first time. Voting Yes provides solutions to all of the problems with the existing high school facility and prepares our town to meet the future needs of our students. Current problems include:

- Fire and security hazards caused by lack of interior walls.
- Inefficient, inconsistent and expensive electric heat
- Inadequate ventilation and poor air quality
- Inadequate and unsafe science labs
- Inadequate and unworkable existing auditorium
- Possible loss of accreditation because of poor and inadequate facilities
- Class disruptions caused by the lack of walls
- Educational strategies constrained by the physical limitations of the building

### 3. Why spend \$30 Million on a "Bandaid" solution when the \$22 Million solution is better?

The cost to the North Andover taxpayer for a new high school is \$22 million. The cost to the North Andover taxpayer to try to repair and expand the capacity of the existing high school is \$30 million. We will have to do something - so which tax bill would YOU prefer?

### 4. Invest \$22 million and get \$58 million in value.

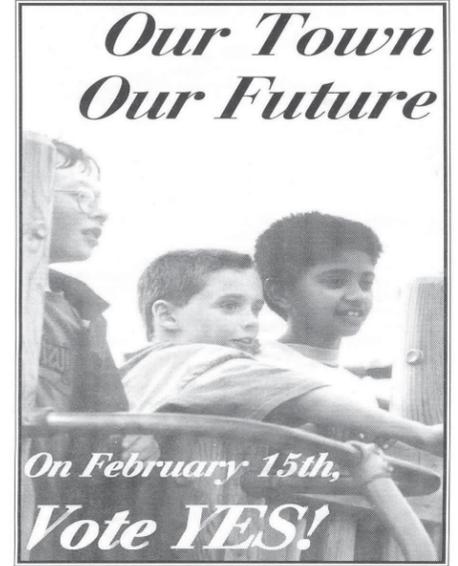
The state reimbursement for the new high school construction is 63% of the total cost. It makes sense to get the benefit of that reimbursement and put some of our state tax dollars to work for our future in our town.

on? Note, also, that this extra cost is a significant fraction of the shortfall in our current school budget. It represents the salaries of approximately 30-35 teachers that the district would now like to have.

One can easily argue that North Andover needed a new high school for numerous reasons. But skyrocketing enrollment was NOT one of them. Any truthful analysis of enrollment projections back in 1999 would have shown that the 50 percent increase was without any foundation whatsoever.

But there should be no surprise with this data. The School Committee and superintendent who gave us these bogus predictions were the same people who also gave us widely inflated numbers to justify the 1998 purchase of the Foster Farm property with a \$1.85 million tax increase.

In 2006 the \$35 million cost of a new elementary school at Foster Farm was finally put to rest when it became clear that there would not be enough students to convince the town to go forward (see "Foster Farm 'Taxpayer Rip-Off' - Time to Fess Up?" in the December 2006 issue of The Valley Patriot).



And all this brings us around full circle to the title of this article. Are we looking here at lies, damn lies, or statistics?

You decide ... but I know what I think.

**Ted Tripp is an International Consultant in high-tech manufacturing methods. He has BS and MS degrees in Chemical Engineering from MIT. You can reach him at [tripp@gis.net](mailto:tripp@gis.net).**

**Hi, I'm Erin Livingston**  
**I'm a member of Team Zingales**

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# Congratulations to The Valley Patriot

*In a very short period of time The Valley Patriot has far exceeded people's expectations to become one of the most relevant and reliable newspapers in the Merrimack Valley. Your no-nonsense news analysis and hard hitting coverage has not only captured the attention of a growing readership, but earned you a much deserved recognition from The New England Press Association. Your hard work and success are to be commended. Congratulations!*



## State Senator Steve Baddour



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