

## GEORGETOWN

## Democrats deliver the taxes

**Lonnie Brennan**  
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Democratic politicians in Massachusetts are not-surprisingly predictable. When the chips are down, you can always count on these pillars of society to throw their communities and constituents under the bus. Sure enough, it happened again. Andover, Methuen, Haverhill... are you listening? It's time to grab onto your ankles. You're about to go for a ride.

How does it feel to be a border town or near-border town, and have the now notorious 'Barbara and Clyde' of the Merrimack Valley (Democrat State Representatives Barbara "Taxes" L'Italien and Barry "Clyde Feel-Good" Fiengold) stick it to you yet again?

This time, it's a mere 25% sales tax increase. And, after all, they HAD to vote for it. It's for the children of course. The children of the MBTA workers I might add whose parents will now have to suffer it out, working until they are at least 55 years of age, with a minimum of 2 more years on the job (going from 23 years to 25 years) before they can collect a taxpayer funded retirement, for the rest of their lives. Two more years... that's what Massachusetts Democrats are calling 'pension reform.'

So, if you're reading this paper in one of the best donut shops around (Heavenly Donuts in Methuen), or one of the best bacon and egg omelet shops (Theo's in Georgetown), or perhaps enjoying a phenomenal Sal's Pizza (Haverhill), or anyplace else in the Merrimack Valley, thanks to Barbara & Clyde, you're also paying a 25% tax increase on your meal! That's right; the cost of coffee just went up, along with burgers, fries, ice-cream... and all just in time for summer! Barbara & Clyde, you've done it again.

It's the Merrimack Valley Democratic way: stick it to Methuen. Cripple Haverhill. Push the sales out of panoramic downtown Andover. Way to go Democrats!

The New Republican Party? The Future for Disgruntled Democrats?

The Republican Party in Massachusetts has been in shambles. With less than a couple of dozen Republicans in the gold-dome State House, the Democratic ma-

chine has crushed any real reform as they continue to excuse-away corruption and tax increases. Ignoring for the moment the limitations of the BostonGOP (more commonly known as the MassGOP), the real hope for change is coming from an unlikely place: Methuen, Haverhill, and Andover Democrats!

It's beginning. Cracks are showing. Some people are realizing they've been had! Raises for government workers on all levels, fueled by more dollars squeezed out of every consumer purchase. I've got two resources for you: the Massachusetts Republican Assembly (MRA: [www.mass-republican-assembly.com](http://www.mass-republican-assembly.com)) and The New Media Summit (brainchild of local political activist Vincent Errichetti). Never heard of either? You shall.

The MRA is making an incredible resurgence after years of invisibility. They're the 'right wing' of the Republican Party. This group believes in reasonable fiscal constraint (conservatism, not endless tax increases). And they have members (and new members such as myself) who support our local pregnancy care center (do what we can to help support mothers-to-be as they prepare to care for their newborns in Haverhill). Quite simply, they're a stark contrast to the go-along-get-along whatever-goes tax/spending Barbara & Clyde's ('Taxes' L'Italien and 'Clyde Feel-Good' Fiengold) of Massachusetts. More on the MRA later. Check out their web site.

The New Media Summit unfolded with an explosion of enthusiasm that continues to reverberate through the internet blogs and channels of all things Republican in Massachusetts. The event, the brainchild of local political consultant Vincent Errichetti strapped a rocket onto the stale, predictable, and previously sinking Republican media efforts, providing a series of training and information sharing seminars. His first-of-its kind event featured appearances by WTTK talk show host Michael Graham, State Representatives Jeff Perry, Karyn Polito, and many more. Not surprisingly, you wouldn't see any Representatives from the Merrimack Valley at the event... they're too busy raising taxes and urging us to shop in New

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## BOXFORD

## Where are the Playing Fields?

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VALLEY PATRIOT BOXFORD COLUMNIST

The Town of Boxford has reportedly issued a Request for Proposal for a 20-unit "affordable" housing development on the Haynes land. "Affordable" is a term of art for a price-controlled political camel created by the Massachusetts Legislature and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

You have to prove you're poor enough to buy these units, but at a targeted income range of \$80,000 to \$108,000, it would be a pretty plush neighborhood. The Haynes land was purchased with Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds and an allowed use of the land is so-called community housing for low and moderate income families. Low and moderate income are defined as 80% and 100%, respectively, of area-wide median income as defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Boxford is in HUD's Lawrence Metro FMR Area where median family income is \$84,800, making the income range \$67,840 to \$84,800. Perhaps the Orwellian Housing Partnership Committee can resolve this at its upcoming public forum.

That \$108,000 income finds a \$440,000 home affordable at principal, interest, and taxes (PIT) of 30% of income and 10% down; an \$80,000 income swings a \$330,000 home. The Lawrence Metro FMR Area median asking price of 1369 MLS listings is \$329,900; 65% are below \$440,000. Nothing here suggests shortages or any need for taxpayer subsidies.

The Town of Boxford purchased the Haynes land nearly two years ago for \$3.3 million for conservation, recreational fields, and community housing. I vigorously opposed this purchase, believing that the land was the less desirable portion of a larger parcel and contained extensive hills, wetlands and their buffers, a pond, a seasonal stream and possibly endangered species. Two hours with a magic marker revealed the small fraction of usable land., In what felt like a land rush atmosphere, the purchase went ahead anyway.

The purchase price could only be justified by assuming the entire larger parcel

resembling my two hour drawing after a year of kibitzing. Most of the land would be conserved, the State would have to decide which additional areas would be preserved as potential habitat of the endangered Blanding's turtle (which may have been resolved now), the few playing fields planned encroached on wetland buffers and might require variances from an unwilling Conservation Commission, and 13 of the presumably best acres could be given away for subsidized housing.

The Haynes project is a 40B. If 10% of a town's housing units are not "affordable" a developer can apply under Chapter 40B for a comprehensive permit which overrides many local zoning regulations, most notably density, as long as 25% of the units are "affordable" loss leaders. Profits may come from land purchased for the legally permitted use. Profits were high during a real estate asset bubble that grew for ten years from 1997, when unit sale prices could greatly exceed construction cost. Market rate buyers must pay \$475,000 for a \$400,000 unit so that 25% of the buyers can pay \$175,000. The market rate buyer may not realize that he has given \$75,000 to another purchaser even when the bubble pops and he is under water.

That gift comes from taxpayers when towns build "affordable" housing especially if mortgage rates rise. Boxford's bureaucrats want to make every unit "affordable" but this would cost millions for the 268 units needed. Only 5 of 20 Haynes units are "affordable." At what cost? Meeting Boxford's quota this way takes 402 "affordable" units plus 1,206 market rate units, totaling 1,608 units or a 62% housing stock growth!

None of this is necessary. When 40B passed in 1969 the median house cost twice median family income, it rose to three times by 1997, still reasonable, and to five times by 2007, fueled by absurd mortgage products and a deranged "affordable housing" federal bureaucracy. It is now rapidly returning to three times income. This statistic accounts neither for retirees nor for the large number of homes bought with large down payments by people with high current home equity. Many people live in homes unaffordable

