

Talbot County Taxpayers Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 438
Easton, MD 21601-8907

March 3, 2010

Town Council
14 S. Harrison Street,
Easton, MD 21601

Dear Council Members:

We do not believe Easton's budgetary practices fully protect its taxpayers. Last year, following the preparation of the fiscal year 2009 budget, we reviewed the Charter requirements and the Mayor's practices. We found several shortcomings that denied taxpayers important information they needed to evaluate the budget properly.

Our evaluation and recommendations were provided to you last June. Since then, we have heard nothing. As we start into a new budget cycle, all indications are that nothing has changed. For your convenience, we have included another copy of our June 2009 report.

While the Mayor is responsible for the town's financial activities, you are responsible to provide oversight. It is troubling that you have not indicated a desire to correct the shortcomings after they have been brought to your attention, and to insist that the Mayor follow the Charter's taxpayer-protecting requirements.

Will you insist that the Mayor provide the required written budget message? The Mayor has not done this in the recent past. Instead, he has made an oral presentation to you several weeks later than the required due date. Further, even his oral presentation failed to provide the information required by the Charter. We listed these omissions in our June 2009 report.

Will you insist that the Mayor publish all of the information required in the annual report? The Mayor has not done this in the recent past, either. Instead, he has limited the report to the audited financial statements. However, the Charter requires more. We listed these omissions in our June 2009 report.

Will you evaluate the charter amendments we proposed to strengthen taxpayer protections and let us know what you decide? In our June 2009 report, we recommended changes to four existing sections in Article VI of the Charter, and we recommended three new sections to be added to that Article VI. After you have evaluated these changes, would you please inform us of how you will proceed with each of them? If you believe any of these amendments are not needed because there are already adequate protections in place, would you please explain to us how these protections work?

We are now in a period of economic difficulty that by all estimates will last several years. And after that, a full recovery could be slow and drawn out over many more years. Budgets will now, more than ever, require very difficult decisions. It is critically important that taxpayers are given every opportunity to evaluate and understand the basis for these decisions. Anything less, would be a disservice to your constituent taxpayers, who we also represent.

Please provide your responses to us at P.O. Box 348, Easton, MD 21601-8907. If you would like to discuss this letter or have any questions on our June 2009 report, please contact our Easton Board Member, Mr. Charles F. Bohn, at 410-822-4688 or our President, Mr. Edward J. (Ted) Doyle, at 410-745-3077.

Respectfully,

Talbot County Taxpayers Association, Inc.
(Sent by Email)

Cc: Mayor Robert Willey
Mr. Steve Nery of *The Star Democrat*

Attachment: Evaluation of the Budgetary and Expenditure Controls Enumerated in the Charter for the Town of Easton, June 2009