




TOWN OF EASTON
MASSACHUSETTS
Office of the Town Administrator

DAVID A. COLTON
Town Administrator

Interoffice Memorandum

To: Municipal Department Heads
From: David A. Colton, Town Administrator 
Cc: Board of Selectmen
Donna Lopolito, Finance Committee Chair
Dr. William Simmons, School Superintendent
Union Presidents
Municipal Employees
Dr. Roger Kligler, Board of Health Chair
Christine Santoro, Planning Board Chair
Press
Subject: Town Meeting
Date: 6/9/09

As you know, significant progress was made yesterday both as a result of the Easton Educator's Association ratification of the concessions sought by the Town and the town meeting action approving the fiscal year 2010 budget. These actions (in concert with the agreements reached with unions representing the DPW, Clerical workers, Dispatchers, and Administrators) allow us to restore some cuts and delay others. However, the fiscal crisis that faces our Town is not over.

There remains significant work to be done and there are significant challenges ahead in order to be assured that our budget for fiscal year 2010 will be balanced.

First and foremost, we do not have a state budget and therefore our local aid remains an estimate. Our local aid was based on the House budget and we will not know the extent to which our estimate is off until the House, Senate, and Governor resolve their differences. We do know that the Senate budget provides less local aid than the House version and the Governor's latest budget proposal would slash our aid further by \$500,000.

Second, some unions, most notably police and fire, have not yet accepted the concessions proposed by the Town. While the agreement of the Teachers helps a great deal it does not in and of itself resolve the budget crisis for the entire year. Their agreement will allow me the flexibility to rescind most of the layoff notices to police and fire, but re-imposition of layoffs will occur if the issues around wage and health insurance concessions are not resolved and/or local aid is significantly reduced.

Therefore I will take the following action over the next several days:

1. Attempt to reach a resolution with the police and fire unions, and make a final determination with respect to concessions and/or layoffs.
2. The layoff of the Health Department Office Assistant will be rescinded.
3. The layoff of the Assistant Director of Health will be delayed pending resolution of the state budget.

The need for long term cost cutting measures has not been alleviated by Town Meeting's exuberance in voting to appropriate an additional \$83,000 from free cash.

It is easy to spend money, especially in light of such exuberance, but as the Town's Chief Fiscal Officer, I am deeply concerned about the Town's ability to sustain this budget. It would be irresponsible to ignore the financial crisis and the dim prospects for increased revenue ahead. Excise tax collections are falling precipitously; our tax title attorney is busier than ever, state revenues are in virtual free fall and new growth in our local economy is at a seven year low. Long term cost cutting in terms of wages, benefits and organizational restructuring are in the best interest of the taxpayers and all town stakeholders

including those concerned with public health and safety. I will continue to vigorously pursue the wage and benefit concessions from the unions who have not agreed AND impose the planned change in management of the Health Department. Therefore, the termination of the Director of Public Health's employment will be implemented as planned on June 12. In addition, the spending controls that were imposed last fall will continue through, at least, the first 60 days of fiscal year 2010.

Thank you for your hard work in these trying times. I understand how stressful this has been for you and all the employees of the Town. A majority of Town employees have stepped up and pitched in to help alleviate this crisis they deserve your praise and the appreciation of the taxpayer. It isn't over yet, but this too shall pass.