

Now is the Time to License Your Dog!

First of two 2015 tax bills arrive by June

Joanna Sumner
Town Clerk and Tax Collector

If you have not licensed your dog yet, you should take care of it before the end of May. Failure to license your dog is a violation of the state law. RSA 466:14 requires the Town Clerk to issue a \$25 civil forfeiture to the owner or keeper of each unlicensed dog. There is also a \$1-a-month late fee after June 1.

Property Relief Tax: Forms will be available in the Town Clerk's Office for those of you who want to apply for the New Hampshire Property Tax Relief Program. To qualify, you will need to meet certain criteria. You need to own your own home, reside there, and if you

are single, you should have an adjusted gross income of no more than \$20,000. If you are married or head of a household with an adjusted gross income of no more than \$40,000, you may qualify.

First Issue Tax Bill: The 2015 first issue tax bill will be in the mail by the end of May. The bill will be due on July 1. This is our first year of sending semi-annual tax bills. Hopefully, you will find it less stressful to be billed in smaller increments than to get a full-year bill in November.

Town Clerk's Office Closed: Our office will be closed on Wednesday, May 6, so we can attend the Town Clerk spring workshop. We will be closed on Memorial Day, May 25. Also, our Thursday hours are now 9 AM to 2 PM. Enjoy your spring.



Mario Ratzki Reports from Concord, April 2015

Voted against the budget, but it passed

Mario Ratzki, NH Representative

My mother was born on April 1, 1920. She is 95 years old. On this day in 2015, I was in session along with 372 members of the New Hampshire House of Representatives. A good showing for the battle of the budget.

Speaker Shawn Jasper had scheduled the vote on HB 2, before HB 1. When the smoke settled, HB 2, (the legal base for HB 1, which is actual budget appropriations) passed 194 to 179. Democrats and a few Republicans did not go along. HB 1 passed also by a larger margin, 212 to 161, in an almost 100% partisan vote.

I voted against this budget, which means to take away from the most vulnerable.

A quick overview of how this budget made it to the floor of the House and passed:

When Finance Committee Chair Neal Kurk and ally Representative Dan McGuire got ahold of the Governor's budget, they went at it with a vengeance. First, they cut about \$150 million from the Health and Human Services budget, leaving an equal amount of federal matching funds on the table for other states to take. Not the most fiscally responsible thing to do.

Then, they moved against the Department of Transportation, ignoring the fact that the DOT budget was already in deficit for fiscal years 2015, 2016, 2017, and forward. The Governor had added funds from the general funds to bolster the DOT. Not only were those funds cut by Finance, but an additional cut of around \$80 million was required of the DOT.

The DOT revolted and made it clear that this would be the end of the department as we know it. Chairman Kurk had not realized that the DOT has plenty of support on both sides of the aisle,

and when wiser heads prevailed, Representative Kurk did a 180 and introduced an amendment to raise the gas tax by 9 cents a gallon! This, coming from a genuine ultra-conservative in the Republican leadership.

Naturally, Democrats were quite unwilling to go along with this unless the Republicans could assure them of at least 40 or 50 Republican votes. It turned out that the Republicans could not come up with 10 votes for a road toll increase, never mind 40 or 50. So we had a surreal moment when Representative Kurk did another 180 and asked us to vote against his own amendment.

Having no choice but to make the DOT whole, Finance decided to raid an energy efficiency dedicated fund of \$50 million as well as the rainy day fund, which only had a paltry \$10 million in it, now gone. It is instructive to note that bond rating agencies would like New Hampshire to have at least \$70 million in there in order to keep and improve our rating. The lower the rating, the higher the costs for borrowing.

So the majority of Representatives voted to break the promise they made not to raid dedicated funds, in the process putting our bond ratings at risk. Not the most fiscally responsible way to go.

Perhaps the most egregious cut the Finance Committee proposed and got in this budget was Meals on Wheels appropriations, cut by half. (For more information on Meals on Wheels, visit MealsOnWheelsNH.org.)

My prediction is that the Senate will restore Meals on Wheels fully and come out as the hero in this sordid tale. At least I hope so. But the Senate is also considering lowering business taxes further, thereby creating another \$80 million hole in our future budgets.

You might be surprised to know that the State of New Hampshire has been prohibited "from requiring implementation of Common Core Standards," SB 101, with a vote of 202 against 138. This is what we call a wedge issue, something that identifies a party and vilifies the other one, based on few facts but plenty of fear.

SB 69 failed in a surprise turn-around on a vote of 164 to 168, finally killed by 186 to 146. This bill would have established "a commission to study social impact bond funding for early childhood education for at risk students."

The budget is now in the hands of the Senate. We wait.

Next to come: Casino!

On a bipartisan note, the Capital Budget, \$125 million worth of capital improvements and matching federal funds, was passed unanimously in Public Works and Highways and sailed through the House on a voice vote. Our chairman is Deputy Speaker, and former Speaker, Gene Chandler.

I am always available at MarioRatzki@gmail.com or at 735-5440.



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COLBY REAL ESTATE

WELCOMES

Donna Pourby and Dave Bates to our team. We couldn't be happier to have these two hard working professionals join us. Don't hesitate to contact them today for all your real estate needs!

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