



## FIRST EDITION – NEWSLETTER

### Make a Difference in YOUR Town!

**Tiverton Taxpayers Association** is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization formed to advance the best interests of Tiverton taxpayers and promote an affordable and high-quality community. Founded in 2013 as a moderate, balanced grassroots organization to stand up for the average taxpayer against government special interests, insiders, and party politicians, TTA concentrates on good government, low taxes, community involvement, and supporting local businesses.

#### Tiverton High Taxation of “We the People”

An early surprise for people as they begin to follow government budgeting is that the tax rate is almost an afterthought.

Families have to figure out what they expect to earn and then set their budgets on that basis. Governments can tell people how much they’re going to pay if they want to keep their homes and stay out of jail, so officials have learned to think differently.

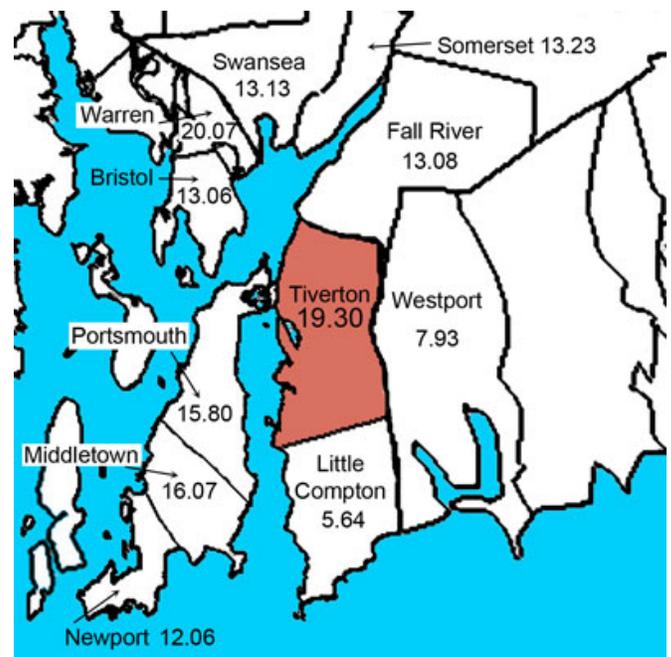
First, they figure out how much money they will need or want. Then, they divide that up across the total property value of the town. And last, they tell the people what their tax rate will be.

It ought to be the other way around. After all, if people were focused on their tax rate, then the town government would have incentive to make property values higher. It’s one thing if your taxes go up because your house is worth more; it’s another thing when government automatically raises the rates when everybody’s property is suddenly worth less.

The following map shows Tiverton’s current tax rate compared with those of the surrounding cities and towns for fiscal year 2015. With the exception of Warren, every nearby tax rate is lower... and by a lot.

At Tiverton’s rate, the annual tax bill on a \$250,000 house would be \$4,825. The owner of a house with the same value in Westport would only pay \$1,983. That’s an extra \$2,842 per year to spend, invest, save, donate, or do something else productive with your money.

Don’t forget, by the way, that that’s before paying a fire district tax and (coming our way) a wastewater district tax.



Article and data supplied by Tiverton Fact Check.  
[www.tivertonfactcheck.org](http://www.tivertonfactcheck.org)

**Enjoy Tiverton:** ([www.enjoytiverton.org](http://www.enjoytiverton.org))

*Enjoy Tiverton* helps inform local residents about interesting and fun events happening in town, to raise awareness and encourage attendance and other support of the great features we have right here in town. These can include local cultural events in the arts, school plays, music, as examples. *Enjoy Tiverton* is a program of the *Tiverton Taxpayers Association*. For more information or to join the *Enjoy Tiverton* email list, email [info@enjoytiverton.org](mailto:info@enjoytiverton.org).

**Tiverton Fact Check:** ([www.tivertonfactcheck.org](http://www.tivertonfactcheck.org))

*Tiverton Fact Check* serves to provide Tiverton residents with accurate information of current and archival interests about the community, without the political spin, hidden agendas, or media bias seen so often in other outlets. *Tiverton Fact Check* also offers a forum where local residents can let their voices be heard and engage in respectful discussion and debate without fear of personal attack and retribution. *Tiverton Fact Check* is a program offered by the *Tiverton Taxpayers Association*. For more information, email [info@tivertonfactcheck.org](mailto:info@tivertonfactcheck.org).

**Tiverton Cares:** ([www.tivertoncares.org](http://www.tivertoncares.org))

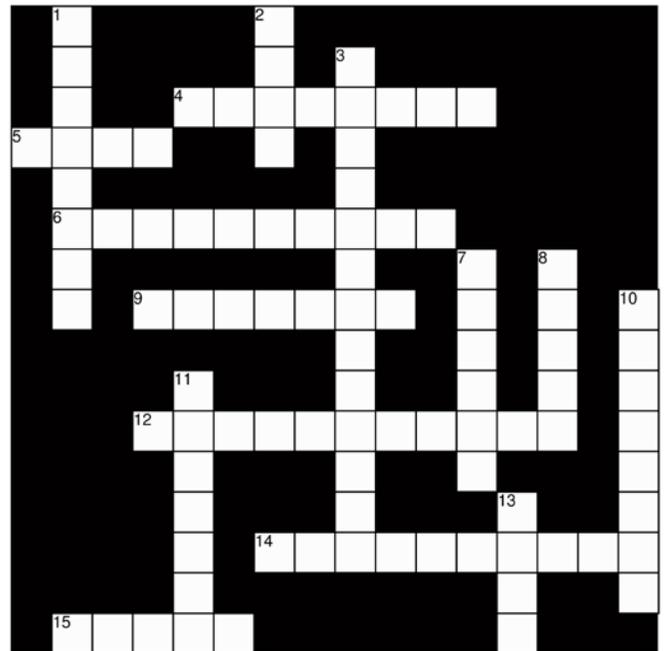
Tiverton Cares is a nonprofit charity dedicated to community assistance, revitalization, education, and support in Tiverton. *Tiverton Cares* aims to better connect those looking for support and those looking to help, and to raise awareness of community needs, good deeds, and volunteer opportunities in Tiverton. In 2014, *Tiverton Cares* conducted a hat and clothing draft, participated in litter cleanup, awarded a community service scholarship to a high school graduate, and raised over \$4,500 to support a local resident fight Ebola overseas, as well as offering confidential assistance to neighbors. *Tiverton Cares* is a separate, independent organization, but *Tiverton Taxpayers Association* is proud to support *Tiverton Cares* as a sponsored charity. For more information or to make a donation directly to *Tiverton Cares* or volunteer, email [info@tivertoncares.org](mailto:info@tivertoncares.org)

**10 Ways to Get Involved:**

*You can make a difference, and stay private or be public about it!*

- 1 - Register to vote, know your precinct, and where you vote.
- 2 - Learn more about the FTR and how to vote early or by absentee ballot if you need to.
- 3 - Join the TTA email list.
- 4 - Donate stamps to help spread the word to taxpayers through newsletters like this.
- 5 - Donate time or money to charity through Tiverton Cares.
- 6 - Volunteer for a board or run for public office.
- 7 - Join TTA as an advisory member (no dues required).
- 8 - Attend a government meeting and watch for political spin and insider agendas.
- 9 - Enjoy Tiverton by going to a local event.
- 10 - Get the facts and join a discussion on Tiverton Fact Check.

**Let's Have Some Fun!**



**Across**

4. Statue where residents read the Declaration every 4th of July.
5. Former school committee member Mike \_\_\_ led the charge to ban the Easter Bunny at Tiverton schools.
6. Clue #5 now leads the Tiverton \_\_\_ Town Committee.
9. The Home Rule \_\_\_ establishes residents' control of the town.
12. The Chase Cory House is located at Tiverton \_\_\_.
14. Tiverton was incorporated as a town in Rhode Island in 17\_\_.
15. In the past 15 years, Tiverton's school enrollment has dropped more students than were in two full \_\_\_ levels.

**Down**

1. In the last election, voters moved the financial town referendum to the third \_\_\_ in May.
2. The state cap on property tax increases is currently \_\_\_ percent.
3. The last town administrator "retired" after he admitted on Channel 10 that he fired a \_\_\_ who tried to tell him about foreman Bob Martin's misdeeds.
7. The current Town Council was the first ever not to appoint the next-highest vote getter to a vacancy on the \_\_\_ Committee right after an election.
8. Money that governments take from you after you've earned it.
10. The Town Hall is located on \_\_\_ Road.
11. Tiverton's tax levy did this from 2002-2003 to 2013-2014.
13. The winning elector budget petition at last year's FTR gave a tax levy increase of \_\_\_ percent.

**Solution (Tip: exclude punctuation and spaces.)**

**Across:** 4. Doughboy 5. Burk 6. Democratic 9. Charter 12. Four Corners 14. Forty-seven 15. Grade  
**Down:** 1. Saturday 2. Four 3. Whistleblower 7. Budget 8. Taxes 10. Highland 11. Doubled 13. Zero

## **Playing Politics with the Budget Committee**

The silver lining of Tiverton government, these days, is that it offers many learning opportunities. Recent controversies involving the Budget Committee, for example, provide a crystal clear lesson on why residents must keep a careful eye on things when government gets this big and is run by a certain group of people — specifically, the group with the overlapping organizations of Tiverton 1st and the Tiverton Democratic Town Committee (T1 and the TDTC).

Initially, the group's actions seemed mainly petty and political, but they're increasingly affecting how the town is governed and what residents' rights are.

The first part of the lesson has to do with the vacancy that the election created when Budget Committee chairman David Perry won a seat on the Town Council. At least as far back as the introduction of the Home Rule Charter in 1994, that has only happened one other time: When Budget Committee member Robert Coulter won a seat on the Town Council in 2010. That time around, the council unanimously appointed the next-highest vote getter from the Budget Committee election, Laura Epke, to fill the vacancy.

This time was different. Both the committee and the council are dominated by that T1-TDTC group. One of the founders and lead spokespeople for Tiverton 1st, Brian Medeiros, made it clear that his group's vision of cooperation is very different from what most people think when they say they want to "work together."

Tiverton 1st didn't win every seat for which they ran, they didn't have all of the highest vote getters, and the gap between those who won election and those who did not was narrow, but none of that matters to them. In the Tiverton 1st view, the fact that they won more seats on the council than an opposing group, Clean Up Tiverton, means that the people of Tiverton want them, as a group, to run the town.

They proved that attitude when they picked Denise deMedeiros to be Town Council president, even though two candidates who received more votes than she did during the election were nominated for the job. And they proved it again when they declined to appoint the next-highest vote getter for the Budget Committee vacancy, John Martin, and instead appointed Louise Durfee, who hadn't run for any offices during the election.

The second part of the lesson came during the first Budget Committee meeting, when it wasn't an incumbent member who nominated the Tiverton 1st candidate for chairman. It wasn't even somebody who'd won a seat by running and being elected. It was Durfee who nominated John Souza — a candidate who had no experience on the committee and who wasn't even among the top 3 candidates when it comes to votes received.

What followed was astonishing. After the vote, and after Souza was chosen as chairman, Epke jokingly asked him whether he'd be able to serve. It was at that point that he responded by saying, well actually, he'd be out of town for the whole month of April. As if to drive the point home, he didn't even bother to show up for a meeting with the Town Council and School Committee that the Home Rule Charter requires.

The third part of the lesson came the very next night, at the second Budget Committee meeting. Every year, the docket that voters consider when voting at the financial town meeting or the financial town referendum has listed line items showing every expected expenditure on the municipal side. As of this writing, the Budget Committee is poised to decide that voters don't need that much information laid out for them, and the docket will only include department totals.

Taxpayers should worry about that possibility for three reasons:

1. People really do rely on the dockets as a source of information, both before they vote and in subsequent years. For many residents who pay attention to the town budget, the docket is the central reference document, and no longer having it is a reduction of transparency.
2. Having a document with line items presented before the budget vote gives taxpayers at least a little bit of protection against manipulation, because the presumption is that they voted for those specific expenditures. If the budget document handed to them for consideration is merely a list of subtotals, then the expenditures are entirely at the discretion of people in government.
3. Tiverton's Home Rule Charter allows any voter to propose an alternative budget and gives that person the ability to state "the specific docket line item(s) to be increased, decreased, or created." Given their behavior in the past (assisted by the Town Solicitor), it's possible that the T1-TDTC group will try to prevent petitioners from altering anything other than the department totals. That would dramatically infringe upon the rights of the people of Tiverton.

In 2008, Tiverton's elected officials — some of the same people and their T1-TDTC allies — manipulated the budget process to reverse a legitimate vote of the people, through what has been called the "stolen FTM." In doing so, they undermined basic trust in Tiverton government. With the winner-take-all philosophy of the officials in office now, they've given no reason for people to revive that basic trust.

Unfortunately, with the election just passed, the people of Tiverton have a long wait until the next opportunity to hold these officials accountable, except through the budget process. It is critical, therefore, that we all keep a close watch on what they say and, more importantly, what they do.

— Justin Katz



Tiverton  
Taxpayers  
Association

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Tiverton, RI 02878

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**TIVERTON TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP FORM (Vol. 1, No. 1)**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

OFFICE PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ FAX \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**Local Home Address**       Check if year-round address

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/TOWN \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

SUGGESTED CONTRIBUTION:    \$20 (Single)    \$30 (Family)    \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Other)

Mail this form and your contribution to:      Tiverton Taxpayers Association  
 PO Box 525  
 Tiverton, RI 02878