

Blog

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December 28

Use Furlough days to replace the paid Holidays!!!

Here is a thought that I am sure will go nowhere since it makes sense and this city can not have any of that. If the employees will not take pay cuts in their actual pay rates and only will agree to furlough days, then lets make all the current **paid Holidays Furlough days**.

I am constantly reading all the days that the city hall, library, museum, etc are closed because of holidays. Why loose more city services by having additional furlough days to reduce costs. Lets make those holidays the furlough days and reduce costs without losing services. Anyone working on these holidays that are now furlough days will do so at straight time and not at holiday pay rates. Those working those days would have to take their furlough days on another day of that week that the holiday/furlough occurs in.

Let us see how many holiday days occur. From the city calendar posted on the city's web site we have: New Years Eve, New Years, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas. That is 9 days. It would only take scheduling 4 additional days. Now some Union contracts and I don't know if that applies here in Troy, employees are also given paid personal/holiday days where they can select to use during the year. Some use them on their anniversaries, birthdays, medical, etc. If Troy has them in their contracts, the first 4 days that qualify should be replaced with furlough days. If Troy doesn't have them then they should allow the employees to schedule their 4 furlough days for the contract year by the end of the first month of a contract year [or first 30 days after this goes into effect].

My point is to reduce the impact on city services if furlough days are the method that the city and their employees decide to go to reduce their payroll costs by 5%. The number of days will change as this percentage changes. This should become a **permanent part of every Union Contract** and should only be replaced with an actual pay rate cuts equal in monetary amounts in any contract that removes it.

I doubt that you will see that happen in this city that wants the taxpayers to bail them out this fiscal crisis. The city council and definitely city management wants to keep the employees happy at whatever cost. We have the **BEST paid staff** in the area. Do you think that the city wants to give up that reputation? **NOWAY**.

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December 23

Update on Police Testimony costs in PPO saga

In a previous blog entry, I have questioned who is paying for the Police Officers that are testifying and/or present to testify but were not called to testify during the PPO court proceedings involving Mayor Schilling and Marvin Reinhardt. I have had discussions concerning this issue with city staff and now have a better understanding as to the process.

The city will send police officers to testify in court proceedings when requested to do so and the request is properly and legitimately submitted. This is available to any individual involved with legal action where testimony of a police officer is required. The Police Department does not charge the litigants for this service. The courts may assess witness fees to the litigants. This fee payment is turned over to the city to be deposited with city funds.

When police officers are called to testify, they may wear uniforms or appropriate civilian attire. They may use department vehicles for transportation to and from court.

This addresses my concerns as far as the police involvement in the PPO court proceedings. I will continue to monitor what occurs with this PPO case. I will provide updates as I get more information. As with all civil cases there are at least two sides to the story and often more. This case is no exception.

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December 22

Asking if City Money used in the PPO Saga.

I heard that 3 more City of Troy Police Officers were at the December 21, 2009 PPO court proceeding. I just had to ask the Mayor whether they were doing this on their time and not being paid with the city's dime. I sent her the following email. I will let you know in a few days what her response or non response was.

Mayor Schilling,

I have heard that two City of Troy Police Officers were at the first PPO [Schilling vs. Reinhardt] court proceeding [one giving testimony] and another three were attending and giving testimony at the Dec. 21, 2009 PPO court proceeding. Can you clarify in what capacity they were participating at these proceedings? Were they present as off duty police officers or as on duty police officers? If on duty, in what capacity were they representing the City of Troy? I ask since I do not see the City of Troy as a party to this court proceeding. If off duty, can you verify that no city taxes will be used or has been used in their appearance at these court proceedings? Were any city vehicles used to get to the court proceedings? I am not concerned about the uniforms even if the city had paid a portion.

Were any other city employees used in assisting or preparing for this court proceeding? My concerns include how much in city taxes were used for the salary of any employee used to assist in preparation, attendance or actual participation of this matter and transportation costs if any city owned vehicles were used for this personal matter. It would also be beneficial to know "How many man hours have been put into this court proceeding that were paid for by the city?"

Hopefully the answer will be a simple NO City of Troy employee(s) were used while being paid by the city. Any and all city employees did it on their time and not paid by the city. That the cost to the city was ZERO dollars spent. If that is not the case, the answer will need to be explained in more detail. Either way, I should hear from you in just a few days. If I don't, I will take that to mean they city employees were indeed used while being paid for their time with City Money.

To be up front, I have blogged about this and will continue to do so. Since I have questioned the possible use of Tax Dollars, I would like to know if indeed any has been used. If none have been or will be, I will mention that since I have raised the question and like to present the True Facts, unlike some information that I have seen being generated.

Victor Lenivov

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PS. This email will be posted on my blog.

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December 17

Furloughs or Wage Cuts?

Which is better: Furloughs or Wage Cuts? For the employee's that's a no brainer – Furloughs. For the Tax Payers – Wage Cuts. How is that Vic?

If 5% reduction in salary costs are the concession, then it is agreed that the employees will be making 5% less in salary in a given pay period. The employees would prefer to have the time off instead of taking a reduced hourly wage. If every four weeks an employee would get paid X dollars. They would prefer to work 19 days at their current pay rate than work 20 days at a reduced pay rate to get to get those X dollars. Yes, they are getting less in a given pay period but they are also working less.

In private industry you are seeing these reductions in their base salary rates not as furloughs, just ask former councilman David Eisenbacher. Thus to get those same X dollars, the employees have to work the full 20 days. Working 20 days will result in no loss of service. Only working 19 days but getting the same total salary results in less service for the residents. While management talks about maintaining levels of service they are agreeing to solutions that result in losses of service. Incompetence or Poor Management, take your pick. We have hired the best at doing that.

Just another point, higher base salary rates also drive up our benefit costs. An actual 5% cut in pay rate also reduces our benefits costs such as pensions. But management won't tell you that just as they won't tell you that furloughs will lower our service level. How can you sell a tax increase to maintain our current service levels when you are negotiating Lower Levels of Service?

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December 15

We need REAL wage concessions, NOT Furloughs!!!

Here we go again with the smoke screen concerning employee concessions. I read in the Detroit News today that John Szerlag announced that "the Troy command in both the police and fire departments have agreed to take a five percent wage cut through furlough days effective January 1" and then we hear that it is contingent upon passage of the millage. Does anyone else see the disconnect or should I say connection? Second, the 5% reduction will NOT BE IN SALARY but in furlough days. So we give them a day off and then they work overtime to make up for it. I will assume that management will refuse any and all overtime for any employee that takes a furlough day. Otherwise we are saving nothing. But don't assume anything from the current retreat management. The employees will make just as much money in salary next year but will spend less time on the job earning it. Overtime is paid at a higher rate than straight time.

Boy, don't you like all the smoke that management can send at the voters. Lets have REAL wage concessions. Make the 5% reduction in actual salary pay rates and put in the contract that no salary increase can occur until the city's taxable SEV is greater than what it was for the current fiscal year 2009-2010 [The December 31, 2008 Taxable SEV value]. You won't see that since that would be REAL wage concessions. Also, NO OVERTIME UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY and the total given cannot be more than 50% of the average for the previous 2 years. Overtime just eliminates what is gained by the concessions.

The employee groups will never agree to these REAL wage concessions since they expect the millage to pass this February 23, 2010. The money generated will be more than enough to offset the proposed property value declines [which current trends indicate will not happen to the levels management is suggesting]. In fact there will be surpluses. So look beyond the smoke and guess what, there is no fire. Just management huffing and puffing hot air.

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December 12

Are Tax Dollars being spent for the Mayor's personal PPO?

How much more are Troy taxpayers going to have to spend to support Mayor "PPO" Schillings quest to get a PPO against Marvin Reinhardt? I was informed that at the Friday, Dec. 11, 2009 PPO hearing, 2 uniformed Troy City Police officers accompanied the Mayor to the hearing in Pontiac [which will be continued later this month]. Troy taxpayers are paying for additional police patrols past her home [stated in her PPO filing]. I would hope that ALL Troy residents with **LEGITIMATE PPO's** would be provided with this additional police protection.

I would assume that if the Mayor has this additional protection because of comments made by Marv during the Public Comments portion of city council meetings [according to her PPO petition], other residents would also be afforded this protection. Anyone that listened to Marv's comments knows what a farce this PPO is. Hopefully city management will provide us with details concerning how many other residents are provided this police service. I talked with a resident on this issue who was threatened with physical injury not limited to breaking every bone in their body and had witnesses to this threat. When that individual contacted the Troy Police Department, they were told to get a PPO against that individual and **WHEN THE INDIVIDUAL IN QUESTION VIOLATED THAT PPO TO CALL THEM, BUT NOT BEFORE.**

I doubt that the tax dollars spent providing police patrols and police escorting are the only tax dollars wasted on this frivolous PPO action. Were city employees involved in the preparation of the CD she presented at the PPO hearing? We should have an investigation into how much involvement there is by city employees in this PRIVATE matter. We need to know all of the city employees that have been used to assist the

mayor in her PPO folly. I have only attended a couple of city council meetings this past year. At one of them, I looked at city manager John Szerlag when Marv spoke. There is no doubt in my mind that John Szerlag has his hand all over this matter.

I remember the comments concerning Ethical behavior that Mayor "PPO" Schilling was leveling against former Mayor Matt Pryor concerning his actions in the littering ticket against former councilman Robert Gosselin. The ticket that the city attorney stated that once issued had to run its course through the courts. The one the judge literally threw out. I wonder what her comments would have been if Mayor Pryor did what she is doing now, using city employees for personal/private purposes.

Section 4.8 of the city charter authorizes the council to investigate matters which the municipality has an interest. This council should investigate expending Tax Payer dollars and using city employees for personal matters by an elected official. The residents and taxpayers of Troy need to know that elected officials are not using city employees for their own personal matters. Any employee found complicit should be dealt with appropriately depending on the degree of their complicity. If the elected official knowingly used city employees for their personal needs, they should resign or the residents should initiate a recall. The investigation [as authorized by city charter] would definitely clear up this matter.

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December 11

Cities aren't looking to Troy for guidance, they are ahead of us and not looking back.

Just a thought for the residents of Troy to consider.

While Mayor Louise "PPO" Schilling, Councilwoman Maureen "Read My Lips" McGinnis, Councilwoman Mary "Cheerleader" Kerwin, and Councilman Dane "No Polygraph" Slater, flat out support closing the Library, Museum, Community Center and Nature Center and laying off all the supportive staff if the residents don't pass the 1.9 mill increase this coming February, **West Bloomfield has a better idea. They sought and obtained concessions from their 6 unions totaling 2.7 million dollars.**

Oh yeah, we have had several union representatives showing up these past few meetings saying they are willing to negotiate some concessions, but John Szerlag stated this past Monday that "IF" [and that is a very big IF] they get concessions, we wouldn't see them until at least July 2010. Gee Wiz, after the voters vote on February 23, 2010. Why is it that West Bloomfield is ahead of the game? Haven't we consistently heard from John Szerlag that Troy is at the forefront and cities are looking to us to see what we are doing? As I have stated in a previous blog entry, what a bunch of hogwash. Troy is not at the Forefront, we are in the rear.

What Troy is doing that other cities are not doing is threatening to shut down everything if we don't give them a tax increase they want. A tax increase that will generate more money than needed to cover the reduced revenues. Yes, cities have laid off employees. So has Troy. But the other cities have asked for and obtained employee concessions. Troy has asked but not obtained. But is their asking just a ploy to get the voters to vote YES. Did you notice Mayor Schilling ask that if concessions are gotten that they be put in the brochure? Nothing about how much the millage should be reduced because of the concessions. Maybe because they will get their concessions restored when the millage passes. Have you heard any talk about NOT restoring any concessions until the taxable SEV goes back to the 12-31-2008 level [current level as of today]?

I may sound skeptical of city management and the 4 city council members that blindly support whatever comes from management's mouth but my dealings with city management justify that skepticism. It's a game they are playing and they hope the residents will fall for their ruse. Problem is, they may succeed.

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December 07

Special Millage Election Brochure, Agree or Disagree?

I just briefly read the proposed Special Millage Election brochure and is it ever biased. What did you expect from city management. I sent the following email to city council. It doesn't deal with the specifics of the brochure but whether if they agree with it will they stand up and for the record state they will implement the threats it makes. Here is what the email stated:

Dear Council members,

I will not go into the blatant miss leading and biased brochure. I will however remind everyone that when you vote for the brochure, that means you agree with everything in it. If you disagree with any portion, you should vote it down. Do not try and weasel out by saying you voted for it but disagree with some aspects. Either remove those parts or you agree with them.

That being said, when did this council vote or discuss and come up with a consensus that you were going to close all those venues listed. I heard management present them as options but when did you agree to them. Your vote to send out this brochure as printed means you agree with the closing of those venues.

You should state before all at tonight's meeting that you will vote to do everything listed under "A No vote means" if the millage fails. You should not vote for the brochure if it includes anything you will not do. So I ask you to be honest and upfront and state for the record at tonight's council meeting you will do everything that is listed under "A No vote means" of the final brochure agreed to, unless you Vote No on the brochure. If you don't, then the residents can judge for themselves your true character. If you do, time will tell if you live up to your words.

Victor Lenivov

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After the final brochure wording is approved, I will dissect it in future blog entries. Some of my previous entries have already touched upon some of the subject matter.

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