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Comptroller Morton, Mayor SPH, BoEC et al.,

Not only are you(BoEC) in violation of our City’s charter by releasing this annual estimate almost a month late(due Oct 25th), but are also in violation of our City’s charter by holding this hearing Dec 4th (due Nov 19th), and putting City Council in the position of also being in violation of the charter(their vote due Dec 5th). On top of that, the City announced this hearing, through posts online, the day after Thanksgiving—just a few days before it takes place. This is deceptive, opaque, and frankly bad governance. There is absolutely no excuse for you not to have this proposed budget available late Oct like New Rochelle and others do. Do better.

At the same time, you’re asking taxpayers to open their wallets further, property taxes have already been raised by this administration an astonishing 35% since 2020(including \$400 in sewer and refuse “fees,” effectively a 10% City tax bill increase on a median annual \$4k City tax bill). At least paying these bills is optional for us here in MV...or for some of us, I should say.

Meanwhile, the city refuses to make hard decisions, such as layoffs or other cost reductions, to avoid even breaching the tax cap(something New Rochelle has never done). We receive subpar services as your office burdens us with millions in debt through interest-only payments on BANS, costing taxpayers \$1 million annually for next 5 years at least. Yet, you refuse to enforce the law requiring all property owners to pay their taxes. Leaving \$59mm in back taxes and fines sitting on the table is such a monstrous abdication of one’s duty and obligation to the taxpayers it is beyond description. Apparently, in Mount Vernon, only half of the adage “death and taxes” is inevitable.

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This refusal shifts the burden onto the rest of us actual taxpayers, having to fill the massive hole in the City Budget, and who are also left paying their school district bill with 6% interest—an expense we shouldn’t have to bear. Simultaneously, we hear veiled justifications like “gentrification,” “changing demographics,” or “altering the landscape” as excuses not to hold delinquent property owners accountable. Enough with the dog whistles, innuendo and other bigoted sounding bile I hear emanating from supposed “leaders” in the community.

This vicious cycle of deteriorating services and higher taxes is driving residents to the brink. Even in seemingly affluent neighborhoods like mine, many older homeowners can’t afford repairs inside their homes. They maintain their exteriors to salvage their dignity and pride, but this city is compounding their struggles. This City’s actions worsen the plight of often single, often elderly individuals while contemplating millions in future maintenance/repair/replacement costs for unnecessary and frivolous projects, such as “free internet” kiosks, or creating unnecessary “neighborhood safety and engagement” departments(?), asking for \$85k new car for the Mayor’s office, \$60k new car for Comptroller’s office—Luxury vehicles that no doubt will be big gas hogging monstrosities.

If you cannot make the tough decisions that municipal governance demands, if you cannot prioritize the greater good, or if you cannot recognize the un-sustainability of these actions—then you and this administration should step aside. By avoiding hard choices for 700-800 property owners, you are harming the remaining 9,000, with compounded interest. This harm also extends to our community's schoolchildren, who face even greater challenges as a result of your short-sighted decisions. The MV school district has the reputation it deserves, enough with the distractions about their bad choices I hear. Who is responsible for City Hall? Where is the Accountability?

The city seems to lack a long-term financial plan. There is no articulated vision for 1-, 3-, 5-, or 10-year solutions/plans for Mount Vernon—just a constant cycle of managing crises. Instead of viewing residents' homes as a piggy bank to fund raises, luxury vehicles for elected (like DPW fleet assessment approved (85k for mayor, 65k for Comptroller etc)), or twenty million dollar tax breaks for your developer donors or millions spent on "WI-FI kiosks in parks(?)" — the city must stop this cycle of harm. Strip-mining generational wealth to feed this unsustainable model is not leadership. It's exploitation.

A concerned resident and taxpayer,
-Gabriel Thompson