

To The Editor:

For the time I have served as both a councilman and your mayor, I've been committed to the notion of municipal debt reduction and decreasing that burden on both tenants and homeowners.

As we all know due to the current global recession, the federal government has amassed large amounts of debt in the trillions of dollars. According to the Cato Institute, outstanding local and state debt has risen from roughly \$1 trillion in 1990 to nearly \$2 trillion in 2005.

That's a 55-percent increase in the overall debt of state and local government in just 15 years.

Here in North Arlington, depleting host fees coupled with deficit financing by prior administrations saddled North Arlington with a debt structure of nearly \$28 million in 2004. Today, that number has been reduced significantly to \$17.2 million or roughly a 40-percent reduction in short and long-term obligations by this municipality. This is good government in action.

The ability of North Arlington during my time as your mayor to reduce the debt is an important and significant reform of the borough's finances and a major difference of opinion and policy between the competing political parties.

The squandering of temporary host fees to the tune of some \$45 million over two decades combined with the EnCap debacle had stymied our ability to grow our economy as a community and chart our own financial course. Past reliances and addiction to solid waste operations only caused North Arlington to overspend, over-borrow and become dependent on temporary outside resources that no longer exist. In the end property taxes soared despite the infusion of cash no other community received.

Under my administration capital investment has been for the most part, "pay-as-you-go" with over \$5 million aggressively secured from county, state and federal sources.

These dollars paid for the renovation of Macaluso Memorial Park, the Little League Field as well as the renovation of the Free Public Library. The acquisition of our latest public safety vehicle and Senior Bus all were paid for by outside sources that did not add to the debt of this community.

On the surface, it seems logical to bond for capital projects and alike.

The problem with giving politicians the power to borrow often encourages unbridled debt and the lack of fiscal discipline or constraint. The notion is that because debt is long-term, it has little effect on the short-term politics of any small town or community.

Don't let such foolishness distract you from the downside of such poor management of your tax dollars. For here in North Arlington, that has been determined to be a false premise.

As your mayor, I am committed to reducing the debt load and establishing pay-as-you-go financing when applicable.

Routine capital projects or simply the notion of borrowing because you can afford the expenditure is simply wrong and what I would describe as "generational theft" of capital by those unable to live within their means.

As we saw with the EnCap debacle, issuing debt for private purposes is a catastrophic failure and such investment must stay private. As your mayor I will never endorse the issuance of tax dollars for private concerns in the case of redevelopment.

Remember, added debt is just tax increases put off to another day and we will bear the burden sooner than later.

Mayor Peter C. Massa

North Arlington