

Town Board Statement on Unpaid Taxes
August 19, 2008

My name is Linda Miller and I'm speaking on behalf of Citizens for an Informed Yorktown, or CIY for short.

At the July 15th town board meeting, CIY asked several questions regarding the \$4 million outstanding in unpaid taxes. We asked the board to respond to the questions at its August 5th regular board meeting. As nothing was said about the subject at that meeting, we're raising the issue again tonight.

We're aware that the town has taken steps over the past few weeks to begin the foreclosure process on 30 properties. But there are still many questions that need answering.

Our questions fall into two general areas. Raw numbers and process.

First we all need to have a firm grasp of the numbers. And by "we," CIY means both the members of the town board and the residents of Yorktown. As taxpayers, we're the ones who pay the tax bill– but it's the members of this town board who determine what that bill will be.

We already know that the problem of uncollected taxes is serious – and growing. In 2005, the town was owed \$2.5 million in overdue taxes. By 2007, the total had risen to \$3.3 million. And now, the total is over \$4 million.

Let me put that number in perspective: \$4 million is almost half of the \$8.9 million in tax revenue that the town expects to raise this year.

We need to know how many liens there are, how old they are, and how many properties are involved. We need to know how many properties the town already owns and how many additional properties are in the process of being foreclosed. And we need to know how many town-owned properties have the potential to be sold at in rem sales.

Remember, short of having the property owner pay the back taxes, the only way the town recoups any of its money is by selling the property.

In all likelihood, all this information is readily available, in some computer, in some office, somewhere in town hall. The question is: is anyone looking at the information – and doing anything about it?

That's our second concern – process.

Does the town have a comprehensive plan for collecting the unpaid taxes? A plan that deals with all the interrelated pieces of the problem: collection, liens, foreclosure, in rem sales.

Who's responsible for carrying out the plan?

Does the town have any criteria for deciding which properties acquired through foreclosure, should be kept and which should be sold at in rem sales?

If the board chooses not to answer CIY's questions at a regular board meeting, then please let residents know where and how they can obtain the information on their own. Both the raw numbers as well as a written copy of the guidelines and procedures the town follows for moving from unpaid taxes to lien to foreclosure to in-rem sale.

Thank you.