

09/04

Letter to the Editor:

There has been much debate over the past few months regarding the Mayor Roberts' plan to sell the Municipal Garage to the Hudson County Improvement Authority and then lease it back from the Authority. This deal pays the city a lump sum of \$7,900,000.00 from the HCIA while we are then required to make annual lease payments of \$250,000.00 per year.

As elected representatives we feel that this is the most irresponsible fiscal proposal of the Roberts Administration. The only reason David Roberts made this proposal is to plug a budget hole to cover up his gross mismanagement of the city's finances in the past 4 years. This budget is already loaded with millions of dollars of fiscal smoke and mirrors.

When David Roberts was elected Mayor in 2001 the City was running with a \$52,000,000.00 budget. A figure he was quoted as saying, "was an obscene figure to run a City the size of Hoboken". In his fourth budget we are looking at a budget of \$72,000,000.00 with an additional \$12,000,000.00 added from the Hoboken Parking Utility. **That gives us a whopping \$84,000,000.00 budget.**

The city budget is the most responsible obligation that the City Council has. As minority Council members we are very frustrated that each of our efforts to control spending are disregarded and subject to ridicule by the Mayor and his Council majority.

In our view, David Roberts has added \$32,000,000.00 of City spending without justification or explanation. At every council meeting we raise questions over his excessive spending, unnecessary hiring, huge salary raises, frivolous events, contracts, interior decorators, etc. As the minority members, we have offered many solutions such as hiring freezes, pay cuts for the Mayor (\$126,600.00), Directors, the inflated legal contracts and even the \$20,000.00 salaries of the Council Members. All of which were called grandstanding and voted down by the Roberts Majority council members.

Our position is clear. This spending spree must stop. **WE ARE IN A FINANCIAL CRISIS.** If approved, this Garage Plan will be a disaster for generations. No reasonable homeowner would jeopardize his family's financial stability with a similar financing plan.

This plan was put into place for **ONE REASON ONLY:** To postpone an enormous tax increase until after the Mayoral election. We say to you Mr. Roberts the people of Hoboken are too smart for your deception.

Michael Russo
Third Ward Councilman

Theresa Castellano
First Ward Councilwoman