



Rochester, New York Two-Tier Tax Forum Held

by Marvin Morris, Rochester, NY

On September 10, the Rochester chapter of Common Ground USA held a forum at the Brighton Town Hall.

Speakers included Alanna Hartzok, Richard Rybeck, Marvin Morris, Ted Gwartney, Senator Richard Dollinger, and Joshua Vincent.

At the conclusion of Rick Rybeck's excellent talk on sprawl, Senator Dollinger told Rybeck he would like to use his overhead on sprawl in his own talk — which he did. By so doing, it appeared to be an endorsement of this aspect of two-tier taxation.

All attendees were personally invited by Marvin Morris who initiated, coordinated and moderated the program. Guests included town councilmen, county legislators, state legislators, various assessors, an assistant to the mayor, a town financial director, a town attorney who advises a county legislator, and various lay people. Talks were given on impact on agriculture and environment, basic causes of sprawl, concepts of two-tier tax planning, along with endorsements quotes of national organizations, an assessor's practical insights on two tier tax planning, and the availability of pro-bono services to provide a study of impact of the two-tier tax on towns, cities and counties.

A survey form was distributed for feedback with some indicating an interest in joining a panel on "seeking consensus for reducing the taxes on

buildings and upping the taxes on land" (a plan successfully accomplished by Perry Prentice, former vice-president of TIME who in the late 1960s had in attendance key persons of approximately 30 national organizations.

Some of the follow-up currently underway includes efforts to:

- * visit with the legislative assistants of Senator Anthony Nanula (D-Niagara Falls-Buffalo), Senator Richard Dollinger, (D-Rochester), and Senator Owen Johnson, (R-Long Island) — all of whom have expressed a deep interest in two tier taxation and two of whom openly endorse it.

- * place an announcement just outside the Monroe County Legislature

caucusing area indicating the availability and use of the edited version of our videotapes in the nearby TV room — as offered by Kevin Murray, Minority Leader of the Monroe County Legislature in conversation with Morris. A prepared packet was provided to each attendee which included an agenda and list of speakers and topics: Alanna Hartzok is the coordinator, Pennsylvania Fair Tax Coalition, Scotland, PA. She discussed the impact on agriculture and the environment.

Richard Rybeck is the Deputy Administrator, Office of Policy and Planning, Dept. of Public Works, Washington, DC. His presentation clarified the

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basic causes of sprawl.

Ted Gwartney, the Executive Director of the Schalkenbach Foundation, New York City, provided practical insights on two-tier tax planning.

New York State Senator Richard Dollinger offered his perception of two-tier tax planning.

Joshua Vincent, President of the Center for Study of Economics, Columbia, MD, drew from his extensive background in preparing community studies to explain how to determine the impact of two tier taxation on homeowners and businesses.

Marvin Morris, Rochester, NY, a long-time two-tier tax activist and Common Ground-USA chapter chair, moderated and offered fundamental concepts of two-tier tax planning, along with endorsement quotes of national organizations.

Other items, besides the survey questionnaire, in the packet provided each attendee included:

- * the list of panel members who joined Perry Prentice's "Consensus to tax land much more and improvements much less";

- * a letter from Mayor Reed of Harrisburg, PA to Niagara Falls Mayor James Galie telling of the high success experienced with two-tier taxation;

- * a copy of the June 1993 Incentive Taxation, "Land Values - Preserve the Environment";

- * a 1997 article by Washington, PA Mayor Anthony Spossey telling of positive results with two-tier taxation;

- * a current article, "Split Rate Tax Reform, Harrisburg (PA) - an Urban Renaissance Story";

- * Common Ground USA's legislative outreach brochure, "The Revenue source is Under Our Feet";

- * "Land Value Taxation" article (reprinted by Robert Schalkenbach Foundation), by the late Henry Tideman, Chicago;

- * Sierra Club Maryland Chapter's 1997 "Sierra Club Statement on the Land Value Tax."

Though coordinating the Forum required a considerable amount of

Morris' time, effort, and creativity, he feels gratified with the success of efforts, which included the counsel and support of Josh Vincent of CSE, and to whom Morris expresses his appreciation.

The panelists all had dinner together the evening before the forum and also lunch at the Town Hall directly after the meeting. "Everyone felt positive about it," notes Morris.

"I believe the recognition and in-

terest created by this venture will lead us into interesting and useful byways and highways which will provide developments that may be of interest for a future report," comments Morris. "Also, this experience may possibly serve as an example for other Georgists to develop a program of like nature in their own localities."

Persons interested in setting up a forum in their area may get some tips from Morris by phoning 716/244-9054.
