

# Hundreds protest higher taxes in Jersey City

Published: Thursday, January 28, 2010, 11:04 AM Updated: Thursday, January 28, 2010, 11:25 AM



By **Melissa Hayes/The Jersey Journal**

Follow

Recommend

Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

Comment **33**

Share

Email

Print

+1 **0**



DAVID JOLKOVSKI / THE JERSEY JOURNAL

A sign lay on the bench of a packed room during the City Council Meeting in Jersey City last night.

Chanting "no more taxes," more than 300 people packed last night's Jersey City Council meeting in protest of their tax bills.

The estimated quarterly taxes are based on a \$492 million budget the city rushed to introduce this month in order to include \$14 million in state aid before Gov. Jon S. Corzine left office.

While city officials said they plan to make more cuts, the budget would increase taxes by about \$800 for the owner of a home assessed at \$100,000. Many residents said their quarterly bills, due Feb. 17, reflect that hike.

Residents John Lynch and Esther Wintner issued a rally call to residents on the Web site [www.JCList.com](http://www.JCList.com), after reading about the budget. Residents waited on line to enter City Hall.

Ellen Wright, a senior citizen, said she can't afford what appears to be a 25 percent increase over the last quarter. She said a group of 40 seniors met and all said it was too much.

"We cannot pay this," she said.

She volunteered to help the council make cuts.

"I'm a former math teacher," she said. "I can come down here and help you if you need it. I wouldn't charge you."

Other city residents offered suggestions as well, like eliminating cars for council members; cutting benefits for part-time employees and appointees to boards and commissions; and conducting energy audits on city buildings.

Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy released a statement saying city workers are taking 12 unpaid days off - a \$2 million savings; four fire companies are closing; and every department is making "sizable cuts."

"Unfortunately, despite these drastic measures, there will still be a tax increase due to increased costs and a decline in revenue," he said.

Resident Yvonne Balcer asked the city to stop giving developers tax abatements, noting their taxes are not increasing right now. She also asked the city to stop issuing bonds and accruing debt. The city has nearly \$37.5 million in debt.

Wintner encouraged council members to make tough decisions and not push the burden off to another year with one-time gimmicks that the city has relied on in the past.

"Did you really believe even for a moment that we would graciously bend over and accept your pillage?" she asked.