



## **Patrick's pen is all that stands in way of sewer-bill relief**

By Joyce Tsai, [jtsai@lowellsun.com](mailto:jtsai@lowellsun.com)  
Updated: 09/10/2011 06:35:27 AM EDT

TEWKSBURY -- It's official: Relief from the town's high sewer bills is a step closer.

A home-rule petition that would enable the town to shift half of its sewer debt to its property-tax levy cleared both houses and landed this week on the governor's desk for his signature in the next 10 days.

"Certainly, that's terrific news for Tewksbury," said selectmen Chairman Todd Johnson. "I'm optimistic that he'll sign it."

Johnson said that town officials were grateful for its legislative delegation's support in shepherding the bill toward passage, making its local determination a reality.

"We're obviously grateful for the support we had, and we're pleased we can deliver on the plan we laid out," he said.

In a May Special Town Meeting vote of 372-219, a Proposition 2 1/2 exemption was approved that would shift half of the sewer debt onto their tax bills to offset the pain of skyrocketing sewer bills.

State Rep. James Miceli said he sponsored the bill because he knew "the communities are relying on it for their fiscal sanity."

State Sen. Barry Finegold said he applauded the town for finding a creative solution to town sewer costs - and others in the Legislature did, too.

State Rep. Paul Adams also said he helped to shuttle the bill, knowing it would help people take advantage of tax deductions, by enabling some residents to write off some of the cost of their regular sewer bills into their local taxes.

The home-rule petition was necessary because the state allows for municipalities through a Board of Selectmen vote to shift 100 percent of its capital project debt to the town tax levy, rather than a portion of it. But selectmen and Town Manager Richard Montuori said they felt a 50 percent shift was the fairer solution, and voter approval was essential to making such a decision.

Selectman Douglas Sears called it "a good step forward."

"Tewksbury proposed this as a creative way of addressing municipal cost -- and we are pleased that the Senate and House have found value in what we've done."

Read more: [http://www.lowellsun.com/ci\\_18866387?IADID=Search-www.lowellsun.com-www.lowellsun.com#ixzz1XIV15Fkv](http://www.lowellsun.com/ci_18866387?IADID=Search-www.lowellsun.com-www.lowellsun.com#ixzz1XIV15Fkv)