

# TheRegisterHerald.com

11/14/2008

## Milan residents looking at 36% increase in town taxes

By: Erikah Haavie

MILAN - Jean Stewart has three children, a 14-year-old son and 16- and 12-year-old daughters. She is worried about her family's immediate bills and their future bills as their children prepare to go to college.

"My food bill has doubled. My electricity bill has doubled," she said. "I can't afford to pay 40 percent more on my taxes."

Stewart was one of dozens of taxpayers who turned out for the public hearing on the 2009 proposed budget Nov. 6 at Milan Town Hall.

The Town of Milan has proposed a 36 percent increase in the town's tax rate for 2009, or \$2.03 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The 2009 budget has been tentatively set at \$1,876,886, an increase of nearly \$344,000 over the current year's budget of \$1,533,341. The fire protection budget for 2009 is proposed at \$242,298, or 49 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value.

For many who spoke, the proposed whopping 36 percent tax rate increase is simply too much for their personal budgets.

"I just can't do it," said Stewart. "It's not just me. It's all my neighbors. I'm scared."

Town Board member David Byrne listed a number of reasons for the large increase in preliminary tax rate: reduced sales and mortgage tax revenues, increased expenses for materials used in highway operations, increases in employee benefits costs and excessive legal expenses over the past few years.

The town is facing increased expenses for the highway and fire departments. For instance, Byrne said, diesel cost the highway department \$2.25 per gallon last year, for next year, it is budgeted at \$4.50 a gallon, a 100 percent increase. Last year, blacktop cost \$55 a ton, for next year it is budgeted at \$85 a ton, a 64 percent increase.

Salt for the roads, totaling \$68,000, went up from \$55 a ton this year to \$68 a ton for next year, a 24 percent increase. "Since the town has to buy 1,000 tons, that overall increase in the budget line is quite significant," Byrne said.

"A 40 percent increase simply isn't possible for a lot of people in this community," said resident Steve Carpenter. "I think you have to go back to the drawing board."

Resident Paul Hughes said he favored cutting back hours for the planning and zoning departments with reduced work loads and cutting back the amount of mowing done by the town.

"Why does this place need to look like a golf course?" he said.

The town has already made some reductions in the proposed budget, Byrne said. A total of \$13,000 has been reduced from the 2008 budget for mowing for town property, to include the town hall, cell tower, recreation park area and landfill cap.

The Town Board has reduced its salaries and contractual expenses from the 2008 budget for a savings of \$1,270 and the town supervisor's salary has been trimmed by \$560, according to Byrne.

One of the big-ticket items in the coming year's budget is road improvements, including major repaving along Odak Farm Road.

Last week, Tom Odak, a resident of Odak Farm Road, suggested putting off the repaving, asking the town to repair a more important road than Odak Farm Road.

"By not improving it, it will keep the traffic slower," he said.

Town Supervisor Richard Barrett said he's concerned that putting off road repairs has been part of the problem for Milan.

"We're trying to do what is best for the town," he said.

Advertisement



A new driving force is in town!

searchNYcars.com

A new driving force is in town!

**searchNYcars.com**



The advertisement features three vehicles: a bright yellow sedan on the left, a red SUV in the middle, and a dark blue sedan on the right. They are all shown from a front-three-quarter perspective against a white background with a subtle reflection effect.

©The Register Herald 2008