

10-15-08

Highway chief slams '09 budget

Funding doesn't meet needs, Town Board told

BY KATHY BOWEN
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Milton Highway Superintendent David Forbes blasted the Town Board Tuesday night, saying the proposed 2009 budget doesn't address critical municipal building and park needs.

During the first budget workshop held by the board, Forbes criticized the tentative \$7.5 million budget saying it "skims over the surface of what we need.

"Somebody needs to step up and make some tough decisions," Forbes said. "This building is going to cave in around us and I have a salt shed that's going to fall on someone."

Forbes said he has in the past expressed his concerns with Town Board members out of the public eye.

"I've tried this in private and I've been told taxes have been lowered for political purposes," Forbes said. "I'm not for raising taxes but in Milton a \$250,000 house is taxed about \$89 a year. You can't get your driveway plowed twice for \$89 a year."

If the budget were to pass as presented, taxes next year would increase from 32 cents to 65 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value in Milton outside the village of Ballston Spa and from 22 cents to 45 cents per \$1,000 in the village.

Forbes said Milton residents would probably understand if they are asked to pay more for town government.

"By the time the 2010 census comes out, we're going to have 25,000 people in Milton," he said. "[Town Hall] was built in the 1980s and the highway building was built in the 1960s. They aren't meeting our needs."

"We now have 426 acres of parks and 12 to 13 buildings and no budget to take proper care of them," he said.

The highway department has for the past three years provided staff and equipment to cut trails and do landscape and maintenance, but Forbes said he can't spare the crews anymore.

Forbes said he's not anxious to increase spending and taxes but a realistic view of the future of Milton includes an increased population and need for services.

"I have four kids riding on my job and I have to answer to the voters, too," he said. "Somebody has got to step up here."