

local news**Desso wants to limit North Greenbush pay raises**

Danielle Sanzone
The Record

NORTH GREENBUSH — Councilman Lou Desso has proposed a resolution for Thursday's meeting which would limit all the town's employee raises to 3 percent and save about \$70,000 in the preliminary 2009 budget, he said.

The resolution is in reaction to the possible budget including larger-than-normal pay increases

Veterans Day 2008

es for 12 town employees with a 280 percent raise for Supervisor Mark Evers and 9 percent raise for Town Clerk Kathryn Connolly.

The town's \$10.8 million preliminary budget has a zero percent tax hike but also proposes to make the supervisor post a full-time position.

"Town residents are facing a tough economy and uneasiness in the workplace. I want to make sure any salary increases in 2009 are both deserved and

in line with what is being done in the private sector. That is the fairest way to address the issue," said Desso who started his tenure on the town board in January.

The resolution would apply to 12 employees on the town payroll including eight elected or appointed positions. It needs a simple majority vote to pass and would give the employees a 3 percent pay increase.

"I think it will be approved," said Desso predicting Evers and Councilman Ernest Kern would vote against it but it would pass 3-2. "I could be wrong. I've been surprised with things at the last minute before."

The proposed budget has a zero percent tax increase for the general fund and the highway department. The average \$165,000 full value assessed property homeowners would pay \$221 for the general fund and \$245 for the highway. The tax rate is \$5.15 per \$1,000 for

the general fund and \$5.70 for the highway fund, officials said.

The Town Board will vote on the budget at their regular meeting on Thursday at 7 p.m., said Evers who has defended his raise due to the full-time hours he spends at the town hall.

With Desso's resolution, the town would take the \$70,000 originally set aside for the pay raises and add it to the town's contingency fund. Currently, the 2009 budget has \$10,000 in the contingency fund, officials said.

"We need to ensure the town has as healthy a fund balance as possible. Any funds we can set aside will be a real safeguard for the future," continued Desso. "Our country and state are facing unique financial challenges, and every move we can make to reduce spending in the upcoming town budget is an important step in protecting town taxpayers. We are talking

about roughly \$70,000 that we will need for unforeseen expenses or to off set possible decreases in state aid. The current fiscal climate clearly demonstrates why we have to carefully consider any spending increases."

At a recent public hearing on the budget, taxpayers recommended that the money used for the pay raises should, instead, be used to give residents a tax break by cutting taxes by at least 7 percent. Residents thought there should be a public referendum in January to determine if the supervisor's position should become full-time. Connolly also announced she was taking her pay raise off the table at last week's meeting.

By law, the budget must be adopted by Nov. 20.

Danielle Sanzone may be reached at 270-1292 or by email at dsanzone@troyrecord.com.