



PRESS RELEASE

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TOWN OF RAMAPO
OFFICE OF THE SUPERVISOR
CHRISTOPHER P. ST. LAWRENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Supervisor St. Lawrence Proposes *ZERO* Tax Increase

Ramapo Supervisor Christopher P. St. Lawrence announced today that he is proposing a *ZERO* Town Tax Increase in 2009.

“There is no single power of government that impacts the lives of people more than the power to tax, therefore, I have proposed a 2009 Budget which meets two major objectives: the continuation of our outstanding Town services and programs and a *ZERO* tax increase to help our hardworking taxpayers cope with deteriorating economic conditions” stated Supervisor St. Lawrence.

The proposed *ZERO* tax increase was achieved by reducing:

- The General Fund Expenditures by \$2,719,963
- The Police Fund by \$860,389
- The Town “B” Fund by \$392,958
- The Highway “A” Fund by \$536,000
- The Highway “B” Fund by \$556,350

TOTAL EXPENDITURES CUT - \$5,065,660

Other Pertinent Facts:

- Revenue from the mortgage tax has been reduced by \$700,000 to reflect the current housing downturn

- An estimated \$1.6 million in savings has been achieved through the change of Employee Health Insurance from self insurance to the Empire Plan
- No new vehicles will be purchased in 2009 in anticipation of transitioning to a more energy efficient hybrid fleet in 2010
- \$357,000 from the General Fund Surplus is being used to achieve a **ZERO** Tax Increase

Economic troubles on “Main Street” in Rockland County continue to escalate:

- Rockland’s Median Property Taxes are the sixth highest in the U.S. rising from \$6,527 in 2005 to \$7,535 in 2007
- Rockland’s Median Home Values Decreased by \$13,000 in 2000 - 2007, while mortgage costs rose by 6%
- 25% of Rockland residents spend 35% of their income on housing costs
- Prices on consumer goods continue to soar! – Our State gas tax 62 cents per gallon is the highest in the nation
- The average Rockland resident works from January 1st to May 8th to pay their tax bills

This Preliminary Budget is a reflection of eight years of Disciplined Fiscal Planning which has transformed a \$900,000 deficit into a \$5,000,000 surplus in the General Fund.

Recently, the Town of Ramapo received an exemplary Bond Rating Report from Moody’s Investment Service, which was an endorsement of our prudent budgeting practices and adherence to fiscal discipline. In particular, the report notes that Ramapo’s Budget surplus and reduced reliance on revenue from

sales and mortgage taxes are seen by Moody's as protection during economic downturns such as the one we are presently facing.

My proposed budget addresses the challenges of the present, without compromising Ramapo's Fiscal Stability in the future. Foremost in my mind, however, is the belief that elected officials cannot ignore the fact that many families are struggling and need immediate tax relief.

A meeting on the proposed Budget will take place in early November.