

# New Hartford dissolves citizen budget panel

'I thought we had some impact,' a former panel member says

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NEW HARTFORD—Town residents will not participate this fall in drafting the 2007 town of New Hartford budget, town officials said Monday.

Unlike the past two years, citizens have not been invited to sit in on committee meetings between Town Board members and department leaders.

William Jenkins of Slattonbush Lane, one of four members of last year's committee, said residents' participation is necessary when putting together a financial plan for the town.

"They should have our input," Jenkins said. "I know last time we were there, we had quite a bit of input as far as what could be approved or not approved on the budget."

Town Supervisor Earle Reed said residents will have a chance to comment on the proposed budget at a public hearing in November.

"My philosophy is, citizens don't have all the information we have," Reed said. "My (department) leaders have too many things going on to sit with residents on the committee."

A tentative 2007 town budget must be submitted no later than Sept. 30 to Town Clerk Gail Wolanin Young, who then can release copies of the budget to the public. The board, mean-

## THE COMMITTEE

- The four-member New Hartford Citizens Budget Review Committee was approved two years ago by the Town Board.
- The committee sat in on budget meetings between town officials and department leaders.
- Town Supervisor Earle Reed said the committee will not meet this year as part of the formal budget discussions. The public still will have a chance to comment on the proposed 2007 budget during a public hearing, which must take place no later than Nov. 9.

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while, will continue to modify the budget. A final budget must be adopted no later than Nov. 20.

Not involving residents in the creation of the town's budget after a prior history of doing so hinders the idea of transparency in government, said Judy Nadler, a senior fellow at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University in California.

"It's clear at one point the town embraced that notion of having the public involved," Nadler said. "Now it raises a red flag to say the public won't have the opportunity to have

Please see CITIZENS, 2A

# Citizens won't sit in on N. Hartford budget reviews

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input until the budget is actually presented at a public hearing."

The Citizens Budget Review Committee was formed two years ago under a resolution that also approved the creation of a property assessment review committee, town Councilman John C. Waszkiewicz III said.

Waszkiewicz, who sponsored that resolution, said he's disappointed the budget review committee won't be part of this year's planning, but he hopes residents come to Town Board meetings when they know the budget will be discussed.

"If the board itself is working on the tentative budget and preliminary budget at open board meetings, it's open to the entire public, so the end result may be even more open government," he said.

Councilman Robert Payne III

## Observer-Dispatch requests N. Hartford budget

The Observer-Dispatch filed a Freedom of Information request Monday for copies of the working draft of the 2007 town of New Hartford budget. Town officials Saturday refused to release copies of the working draft, which had been referenced repeatedly during a public meeting.

"It's just a bunch of paperwork," town Supervisor Earle Reed said Monday. "It's a work in progress. It's rough figures, nothing set in stone."

The town must respond to the request within five business days of receipt.

Reed said he expects the 2007 budget to be somewhere around

said the board is planning a PowerPoint presentation for the public hearing on the budget.

"We will go over the entire

\$12.3 million. Money will be borrowed for at least three items — two trucks for the town highway department and a generic environmental impact study, Reed said. The environmental study, which could cost about \$350,000, could address growth and water drainage issues in the southern half of town.

Reed said Town Board members and department leaders will continue to work on a tentative budget, which has to be filed with the town clerk no later than Sept. 30. After that date, the public can get copies of the budget, which will be the subject of a public hearing before the board votes on it in November.

budget with all residents who want to come to that meeting for a review," Payne said. "It's a little different than what previous

administrations have done in the past, but this should be a very informative meeting (Reed is) planning to put on."

Telephone calls Monday to Councilman David Reynolds and Councilman Richard Woodland were not returned.

Tilden Avenue resident Russell Cerminaro, who sat for two years on the budget review committee, said Monday he did not know the committee won't be allowed to participate in budget discussions. He does plan, however, to get a copy of the tentative budget and review it on his own.

"What we brought was a closer look at the budget and a better review of the budget process," Cerminaro said. "I thought we had some impact on what was going on there and certainly (residents) won't have any impact without a citizens committee."