

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 Slaytonbush 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.

■ **INSIDE: O-D files Freedom of Information request to see draft of budget, 2A**

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

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extend a little longer if weather cooperates, she said.

Continued from 1A

Councilman Robert Payne III

"We will go over the entire

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

"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."

Continued from 1A

And a server was added to allevi-

When Kelly Seminaro's son Dominick, a junior, got his schedule this year, he was missing lunch

"I'm not worried about it, I'll be fine," Dominick said.

Tis the Season for