

timesunion.com

No new taxes in 2009 Saratoga Springs budget

By DENNIS YUSKO, Staff writer

Click [byline](#) for more stories by writer.

First published: Wednesday, November 26, 2008

SARATOGA SPRINGS — City leaders unanimously adopted a 2009 budget Tuesday that contains no new taxes.

Faced with a \$1.66 million state cut in video lottery terminal (VLT) impact aid and forecasts of declining revenues, the council approved a \$37.3 million city budget that relies on spending more than \$1.5 million in reserve and contingency funds. The budget also eliminates jobs in the Public Safety and Public Works departments, and the council will consider enacting a hiring freeze on all full-time city employees next month, said Finance Commissioner Kenneth Ivins, who proposed the spending plan.

"We may be looking to cut further in coming years," he warned.

Ivins had recommended a 3.5 percent tax hike as recently as Monday. But Tuesday, he proposed taking \$648,887 from a \$787,000 contingency fund to avoid raising property taxes. The plan also relies on taking \$853,000 from the city's \$4 million in reserves.

The council almost approved a budget Tuesday that would have slashed 20 Public Works jobs, Anthony Scirocco, the department's commissioner, said. He and union members in attendance objected to the cuts, saying they would result in a reduction of services like snow plowing, leaf pickup and more.

Some of the cuts were then restored after Accounts Commissioner John Franck's department effectively loaned Scirocco's department \$120,000 to keep some of the public works positions. The money could be paid back with the sale of the parking lot by Lillian's restaurant on Broadway, Franck said.

Scirocco had said he needed \$200,000 worth of cuts restored to make the department viable. But he seemed content to get the \$120,000.

Tuesday's vote means the city's average property tax rate remains at \$5.36 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

Dennis Yusko can be reached at 454-5353 or by e-mail at dyusko@timesunion.com.