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## Saratoga budget still contingent

Bids due Nov. 20 on cost of a new police station; taxes would be higher

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SARATOGA SPRINGS — Next year's final city budget and its tax impact depend on whether the City Council votes to build a new police station.

A one-time cash injection of \$526,000 from the state Department of Environmental Conservation allowed Finance Commissioner Kenneth Ivins last week to reinstate several jobs into the 2009 budget and bring down the projected tax rate increase to 2.7 percent from the 3.8 percent originally projected.

But bids due Nov. 20 to build a new police station could increase that number if the City Council accepts one at a special budget meeting planned for Nov. 24, Ivins said Thursday. Preliminary estimates have put the project at \$11 million or more

"That will be the big discussion night," he said.

A budget workshop will be held at 6:30 p.m. today in City Hall.

The issue has split the council along party lines and has been debated for months.

The budget's general fund now totals \$38.5 million after Ivins' latest modifications. A 2.7 percent tax rate increase would cost the owner of property assessed at \$200,000 about \$30 more a year, Ivins said.

The budget would restore at least 17 positions to the Public Works Department and overtime money for police at special events that Ivins had proposed cutting, and would add two police officers so future overtime costs can be cut.

To pay for the changes, the city will use \$400,000 of the \$526,000 grant. It received the monies for a program instituted under former Public Works Commissioner Thomas McTygue that uses methane gas from the city's former Weibel Avenue landfill to operate ice-making compressors in ice rinks. The city also saved about \$100,000 in lower-than-expected liability insurance premiums, and no money will be needed next year for the proposed indoor recreation facility, meaning that facility won't open until at least 2010, Ivins said.

The finance commissioner said he was concerned that, in the future, the state would cut or eliminate revenues to the city for hosting state video lottery terminals, which now make up more than 10 percent of the budget's revenues.

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