Written by Mark Jaeger
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After this year's spending freeze, clerk's numbers for 2011 show a $23,700 levy hike may be possible

The Finance and Budget Committee began working on the 2001 Village of Fredonia budget last week, but one thing is already clear.

Next year's budget won't be quite as austere as this year's, when a zero-increase levy was mandated.

Even before trustees started whittling the spending plan, Village Clerk Jo Ann Wagner presented the committee with raw numbers incorporating 3% increases in most cases.

Using that approach, Wagner said, the would increase the village levy from $790,840 to $814,565. The state-calculated levy limit would allow the village to raise its levy to $889,000.

Assuming the village's assessed valuation remains unchanged, the village tax rate would increase 14 cents per $1,000 of valuation — to $4.82 per $1,000.

Because the Personnel Committee has not yet discussed pay for village employees for 2011, this year's pay rates were retained in the preliminary plan. Village employees got no raises last year.

Village President Joe Short told the committee to take a first stab at formulating a spending plan without waiting for direction from the Village Board.

"I think we should just let the Finance Committee put the budget together and present it to the Village Board. The budget was very frugal for the past two years, but we can't keep that up without backsliding," Short said.

Department heads submitted budget requests to the committee, but were not told to limit increases to 3%.

The committee is expected to take a close look at capital spending requests, which came in $83,000 over the 3% threshold.

That overrun was immediately modified when the wastewater treatment utility offered to accept an old Department of Public Works pickup truck instead of buying a new one.

Trustee Chuck Lapicola said the committee will need to digest the department requests and assess whether a 3% hike is appropriate.

“This is going to take a while to look over and think about,” Lapicola said.

The next committee meeting is Oct. 12.