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CHEEKTOWAGA

3 Cheektowaga Town Board members willing to cut their salaries

By Michelle Kearns
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Three members of the Cheektowaga Town Board say they are willing to cut \$2,000 from their \$20,068, health-insurance-augmented salaries as the town struggles to cut \$273,000 from the \$78.8 million budget proposal.

Uncut, the current town spending plan for 2009 is 3.6 percent higher than this year's. It could raise taxes — with the percentages varying depending on a homeowner's sewer, fire hydrant or village district — by 2.83 percent.

In a news release issued Monday by e-mail on behalf of Council Members James Rogowski, Richard Zydel and Stan Kaznowski, the three also suggested a number of other cuts. They include the elimination of full-and part-time positions in a number of departments, and curtailing of raises for some part-time employees.

“We should lead by example,” said Rogowski, who along with Zydel, proposed cutting the town supervisor’s pay by \$7,000 last week when they tabled the budget. “I think we should start with Number One, which is the Town Board, and go from there.”

Rogowski, who works as a technology teacher at Lockport High School, said he could not be more specific about the other proposed cuts until a work session Wednesday.

At the last two board meetings, residents have said they cannot afford more tax increases. Town Supervisor Mary Holtz has said she is open to having her \$7,000 budget officer stipend cut as Rogowski suggested at last week's meeting.

When asked about the three board members' latest proposal, Holtz had the same criticism she had last week: She would prefer that these new ideas be discussed at meetings rather than proposed by surprise.

“My biggest concern is that we’re not working as a team,” she said. “The budget is too important. It affects too

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many lives to not work together. . . . It sort of undermines the spirit of cooperation.”

But Zydel said he sees the news release as a way to let people know board members were working to keep taxes down. Zydel said he was thinking of residents who went to the meetings and said they were living on pensions that did not change as costs went up.

“We have to keep them as low as we possibly can,” said Zydel, who has a full-time job as a project administrator for a company that manages holding centers, Asset Protection and Security Services.

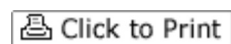
Kaznowski, who works as chief financial officer at Curtis Screw, explained that putting out the group of three’s ideas early this week was a way to put pressure on the group to make more budget cuts.

“I don’t have any specific reason except we’re trying to cut more,” he said. “I think the taxpayer will benefit.”

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