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Last year the budget process was considered dysfunctional by most. Amherst was promised a different process this year and we have worked diligently to ensure that the process was inclusive and detailed. We started on the 2011 budget in January 2010, the month we took office. A long range budget forecasting committee lead by Councilmember Sanders studied Amherst's finances for a month and concluded with the comptroller that there was a nine million dollar budget hole. Deputy Supervisor Marlette has given valuable insights into the process and Councilmembers Anderson, Manna, Nuchereno and Sanders have been responsive in their roles as department liaisons.

Assuming the 2011 tax levy would remain the same as the 2010 tax levy, the comptroller and I estimated that \$109,000,000 should be available for spending in 2011. We hope to implement a plan to increase revenue by three million, decrease spending by a net of three million and use three million of surplus which would be replaced by another three million in cuts in 2012.

The comptroller and I met with all department heads after they submitted their written budget requests. Sometimes councilmember liaisons participated. We are drawing up a tentative budget and will again ask the departments for input which will lead to the submission of a proposed special districts budget on or before September 15 and the submission of proposed operating budgets on or before September 30.

We are using the following assumptions:

- (1) Layoffs that typically involve less senior and less highly paid employees are an inefficient way to lower expenses.
- (2) Some services provided by the town could be performed by others in a more cost effective manner.
- (3) The New York State Retirement Incentive Part A allows Amherst to target by job title and by seniority and could be very helpful in reorganizing and reducing the workforce to minimize layoffs.
- (4) Department heads can help us identify money in previous budgets that is wasted or unspent that can be eliminated.
- (5) Long term financial stability will require cooperation from Councilmembers, department heads, collective bargaining units and employees.

By repeatedly meeting with department heads, the comptroller and Councilmembers, we have strived to build a consensus model as opposed to the acrimonious and arbitrary process of last year. I have been pleased with the efforts of all those involved with changing the process and feel we have established a new model for town government,

The process concludes with four budget meetings in October. The proposed budget can be amended by a majority of Councilmembers at any of these meetings. Their minutes can be viewed on our website. October 25 at 7 pm is the final meeting to adopt the budget.