

Henrici says Hamden is fiscally sound

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Editor **HAMDEN** - Mayor Craig B. Henrici delivered his "state of the town" address Tuesday, saying the town is financially fit and ready to invest in what makes the community an attractive place to live.

Henrici spoke to the **Hamden** Chamber of Commerce Tuesday. Whitney Center sponsored the luncheon at Laurel View Country Club. About 20 of the 75 people who attended work for the town.

Henrici said that grand list growth of 1.16 percent from last year is an example of the town's strength as a place where people want to live and work.

Other improvements include cutting the \$3 million deficit in the town's medical self-insurance fund in half, and increasing pension contributions to the underfunded pension account.

"There is only one way to achieve these undeniable fiscal steps forward: a consistent focus on honest budgeting coupled with an unrelenting review of every expenditure, be it \$5 or \$5 million," Henrici said.

He said the proposed \$177.3 million budget "invests in people."

He is proposing the Board of Education receive all that it's asked for, \$77.73 million, "because we can make no better investment than in our classrooms ... competition in job markets is fierce, and our students must be given the right tools to compete."

He also said the budget fully funds libraries and parks, for example, because they are among the reasons families move to **Hamden**.

The proposed 2008-09 budget calls for a 2.3 percent increase over the current budget of \$173.34 million, and a proposed tax hike of 0.87 mills to 29.97 mills. Compared to other towns that have proposed higher increases, or those that will get tax hikes because they are phasing in revaluation, Henrici said his proposed budget "keeps money in the pockets of taxpayers."

He said he is working with other area mayors to make sure the legislature

increases payment in lieu of taxes grants to communities that have colleges and hospitals.

Councilwoman Betty Wetmore, chamber chairwoman, said Henrici's remarks skirted some issues.

Wetmore said she would like the proposed tax increase eliminated, but she is still studying how.

"Over the last few years, we have had huge tax increases. I would like to see a year when we don't have one," Wetmore said.

While not giving raises to town department heads is a start, Wetmore said she would like to avoid a tax increase.

"I'm all for education, but maybe we should shave a little bit without cutting programs and services," she said.

Henrici also said the town needs to move forward on renovating Memorial Town Hall to include a police station, a proposal that is starting to face opposition.

Wetmore isn't a fan of relocating the police station.

"It's so much money, and there will be huge traffic issues," said Wetmore, who would rather see a fire-police **animal shelter** complex built at the former Dadio farm on Putnam Avenue.

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