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Board postpones action on Guilderland budget

GUILDERLAND—The Guilderland Town Board postponed adoption of its \$4.4-million preliminary budget after listening to a series of questions from town residents Thursday night at a budget hearing that lasted nearly three hours.

Supervisor Carl J. Walters took more than an hour to analyze the town's spending package before turning the floor over to an estimated 40 taxpayers, many of them Democrats who reiterated complaints heard during the campaign.

The preliminary package, which could undergo further changes before being adopted at an "undesigned date," shows a \$560,000 increase over the 1975 \$3.83-million budget.

The tax rate in the general town budget will remain at the 1975 rate of \$8.62 per \$1,000 assessed valuation, in part because of a redistribution of federal revenue sharing to the general fund.

Tax rates in the part-town and highway budgets will also remain the same as last year.

However, taxpayers face increases in special budget areas, including sewer, fire and water districts.

Critics, who included Democratic committee members, town Democratic Chairman Andrew Andersen Jr. and John Esler, president of the McKownville Improvement Association, focused on money designated for unexpended funds and decreased appropriations for the police department.

Esler was particularly critical of a \$20,000 increase in the cost of water in the McKownville Water District.

Walters said the increase is justifiable because of the improved water services McKownville residents have been receiving for the past two years.

Discounting complaints about unexpended balances and contingency funds, Walters said such funds are essential as a "safety valve" in the event of a fiscal emergency.

Praising the town's budget policies he said, "I don't think there's another town in the capital district that gives its taxpayers the budget information that we do.

"Criticisms of our budgets by (state Division of) Audit and Control have been the least of any other community around."