Daily Journal • Daily Messenger Wednesday, July 1, 2009

Salem back on track after budget passes

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SALEM — The budget for the 2009-10 fiscal year has passed in Salem and council members and residents alike are very pleased.

"I feel like we made some big steps," said Mayor Diane Head. "We were able to fund our depreciation and called our reserves up to the best of our knowledge."

The budget passed with just over $1.1 million in the enterprise or water fund, she said.

With a total tax rate reaching 46 mills, Head said she is excited about a possible 5 percent raise for town employees.

"We had done it last year, and we knew if we could again, we would," she said. "The mills had not been raised in several years and with our state cap, I feel like we need to follow along each year to get caught up."

The millage increase amounts to just about a dollar.

The council also hopes to hire a full-time firefighter with the new budget.

But as the town continues to recover from lost revenue, Head said it will be able to make serious strides to pay down a loan from 20 years ago.

"The total debt we have right now is $134, 947.48," said Town Clerk Tonya Fowler. "Instead of paying it down in one lump sum, we are going to make extra payments each month. That way, if something comes up with the town, we will still have money on hand."