

Hamden council may hire lawyer to defend budget

By Ann DeMatteo
Register Staff

HAMDEN — The Legislative Council will meet in emergency session at 5:30 tonight to decide whether to hire a lawyer to defend its budget against the budget Mayor Barbara A. DeNicola is trying to implement.

Council President Pasquale Corso, D-7 said members will meet in the Memorial Town Hall auditorium and will be asked to vote on funds to hire a lawyer "to advise us and represent us."

A lawyer hasn't yet been picked. Corso said he didn't think the matter could wait until next week because "we have to be ready for anything that's coming down the pike. We have to go to a lawyer because apparently the town attorney doesn't represent us in this."

The attorney would be paid from the council's professional/technical services

account.

Earlier this week, the council, by a 10-4 vote, passed a resolution which put its \$113.4 million budget and 34.46-mill tax rate into effect for the fiscal year that starts July 1. But because the council voted on the budget on May 17, one day after the deadline, DeNicola feels her budget is the legal one for the town. She said she is upholding the charter by implementing her \$114.7 million budget. The spending plan keeps taxes at the current rate of 35.06 mills.

DeNicola on Thursday shied away from answering whether she thought an independent authority should rule on the budget question. She said she believes her budget and her tax rate are the ones that will take effect when the new fiscal year starts July 1.

"My position is the charter says if the council doesn't act within the time frame, the mayor's bud-

Please see Hamden, Page B4

Hamden council meets tonight on budget fight

Continued from Page B1

get is what you operate on. The mayor has the right to fix the tax rate," she said.

"I certainly hope the mayor puts her tax rate into effect," said Councilman David Bouvier, R-9. "I would hate to see the council waste taxpayer money to cover for their mistake. I don't understand what the emergency is. We were supposed to meet on other issues on Monday. I don't understand why we can't do it then. The reality is, the council president made an enormous error and now he wants every citizen in this town to pay for it. I'm adamantly opposed to that."

Asked whether the matter could go to court, Corso said, "If it's necessary, so be it."

Meanwhile, DeNicola said she's not ready to discuss how town officials will implement the tax rate, but should be by today.

DeNicola said that Town Attorney Joshua Winnick met with Tax Collector Barbara Tito and Finance Director William Elder Thursday to resolve the matter.

Tito this week received orders from Corso and DeNicola to implement the respective tax rates. In the past, the tax collector has received the tax rate directive from the council president.

Tax bills have to be mailed by June 30. It takes about two weeks to have the bills printed and prepared for mailing, Tito said.

Tito declined comment about the meeting, referring questions to Elder, who couldn't be reached for comment Thursday. Winnick also could not be reached.