

# Discussion on tax cap Thurs.

## Public invited to hear Santagate's idea

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As a way to possibly curb high property tax bills, there will be a public discussion on the idea of implementing a cap on the amount to be raised in taxes each year in Claremont.

School, city and county officials, state representatives, Senator Bob Odell have been invited to

 **Claremont** discuss the cap on Thursday.

The cap was first proposed by City Manager Guy Santagate during the Dec. 10 city council meeting.

"This stems from people I've talked to that have a large real estate tax bill," said Santagate. "And this isn't just in Claremont. It's all over New Hampshire and the country. This is just a real difficult economy."

The cap is being proposed to help alleviate the strain that

comes from property taxes, Santagate said.

"I've said for a while that a property tax is the worst kind of tax," said Santagate. "It's the only broad-based tax that New Hampshire has, and I think the time has come to have an open discussion about putting a cap on spending."

Santagate said that it is important for the schools, the county, and the city to have a discussion, even if nothing comes from it.

"This is one way to look for relief. We'll have all three entities that account for the tax rate together for an honest discussion," said Santagate. "It won't be to pressure anyone or point the finger, but to talk about the possibility of a cap."

"If it makes sense, we'll proceed, if not, at least we had the discussion," he said.

"The county commissioners and state representatives, the

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school board, and the city council will all have a chance to voice their opinions. The council hasn't actually had a chance to talk about the cap," said Santagate. "And we want public input. We're reaching out and looking for the public's input on this... That's very valuable information for us."

Santagate said that a two and a half percent cap was not intended to be the final number, and if the cap is enacted that the number could change.

"The two and a half percent comes from the consumer price

index and it reflects the (increase in the) cost of living," said Santagate. "The labor unions also use that figure, but that number could change."

Santagate said that the meeting is just the first step, and that no action would be taken.

"This is just the first of maybe many other discussions," said Santagate. "This is a chance to see how a cap could work and to see if it's something that as a community we would want to pursue."

Maura Carroll, who is an attorney with the Municipal

Association of New Hampshire, will be moderating the discussion.

"I'll begin with a very brief discussion on a very complex matter describing how (the cap) would work," said Santagate.

The meeting has been moved to Stevens High School from the Goodrich Room at Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center to accommodate more people. The meeting will be held in the Stevens High School Auditorium, beginning at 6:30 p.m., and the public is encouraged to attend.