

THE ABINGTON JOURNAL

Lackawanna Trail Board of Education approves budget; new member sworn in

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Posted June 26, 2018



Wyoming County District Justice David Plummer, right, swears in Robert Minick as a member of the Lackawanna Trail Board of Education during a regular meeting June 25. - Robert Tomkavage | Abington Journal

FACTORYVILLE — Members of the Lackawanna Trail Board of Education voted 6-3 to approve a final budget of \$22,477,252.80 for the 2018-2019 school year during a regular meeting June 25. The millage rates are 165.68 for Lackawanna County and 93.80 for Wyoming County. A mill is a \$1 tax on every \$1,000 of assessed property value. The budget includes a 2 percent tax increase for Lackawanna County residents and 2.39 percent increase for Wyoming County.

Michael Mould, Kevin Mulhern, Deborah Naylor, Joseph Ross, Philip Stark and David Thorne voted in favor of the budget. Adrian Bianchi, Robert Minick and Joseph Strauch voted against it.

Despite voting against the budget, Strauch praised the work of Business Manager Keith Glynn.

“I’d like to thank our business manager for the excellent work that he’s done trying to juggle this difficult, virtually impossible job,” Strauch said. “You can’t make everybody happy. I’m very glad to see that some attention has been paid to address the needs of the music students, but I’m also disappointed that it did not go further.”

While Mould recognizes the difficulties tax increases place on taxpayers, he believes they are necessary to ensure the students receive proper instruction in the classrooms.

“The financial challenges have been expressed loud and clear by many of our constituents with regard to the budgetary responsibility,” Mould said. “Having worked with the development of this budget since Day 1, I sincerely believe it represents a conscience effort to keep the challenges of our constituents front and center and, at the same time, thoughtfully fund the critical undertaking of providing an educational experience to prepare our children in the district for life in the 21st century.”

Members of the board voted 8-0 to appoint Mould as Lackawanna Trail School Board Treasurer for the 2018-2019 school year at a stipend of \$600. Mould, who abstained from the vote, plans to delegate \$200 to the booster club, \$200 to Arts Alive and \$200 to Friends of Music.

Members of the board voted 9-0 to approve the Homestead and Farmstead Exclusion Resolution. According to Glynn, the resolution provides a reduction in taxes of \$232.81 per household or farmstead that applied and were approved. Glynn added it equates to a \$1,405 assessed value reduction in Lackawanna County and a reduction of \$2,480 in Wyoming County.

The district’s student meal prices were approved for the 2018-2019 school year: elementary and high school breakfast – free, high school lunch – \$2.90, elementary lunch – \$2.65, and reduced lunch (district wide) – .40.

During his superintendent’s report, Matthew Rakauskas announced that Dalton Borough Council members approved a motion at a recent meeting to move forward with working out the details of the contract the board passed for a school resource officer. Per Rakauskas, the maximum cost to the district would be approximately \$48,000; however, it could be less should the district receive grants to defray the costs.

Stark, the board president, announced the July 9 regular meeting will be cancelled.

The board will meet for a work session meeting Aug. 6 and a regular meeting Aug. 13, both starting at 7:30 p.m. at the Lackawanna Trail Elementary Center.

Members of the board of education held a specially scheduled meeting June 18 to approve a replacement to fill the unexpired term of Karl Beichler, who passed away May 22, in Region #2 through 2019. Minick was approved by a vote of 5-2.

Rakauskas announced a plaque will be dedicated to Beichler at the beginning of the Aug. 6 meeting.