

## Trail board hopes to hold lid on tax increase

by Robert Baker

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If you thought the tax burden on property owners in the Lackawanna Trail School District jumped too much going into the 2016-17 year and were worried the School Board might go for a repeat performance on 2017-18, take heart.

David Thorne, president of the board spoke on behalf of its finance committee and said Monday night, that if there were a tax increase next year, it would stay within the index allowed by the state Department of Education.

The roughly 3.2 percent would be a far cry from the 12.5 percent additional tax burden Wyoming Countians faced this past summer, and the eight percent additional tax burden Lackawanna Countians faced.

Thorne said the finance committee also talked about possibly eliminating the per capita tax, but decided that the revenue generated was needed and would be spent specifically only on equipment upgrades.

Later in the meeting, business manager Keith Glynn said that taking the finance committee's recommendations, he would be drafting a budget probably by the end of January that followed a state mandated index.

In other business, the board approved a settlement agreement between the district and the Lackawanna Trail Education Support Professional Association.

Board member Joseph Strauch asked for the public's benefit if the superintendent might speak to the matter, but Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas said, "Our solicitor advises we not talk about this."

The matter passed 8-1 with Strauch voting against.

The board also approved the retirement of LTESPA member Diane Britton, and a contract for ACA Compliance Reporting and Document Preparation with DeHey McAndrew.

In other matters, the board

\*Approved Linda Lombardo as Junior High Softball Coach position, at a stipend of \$3,350.

\*Approved the following substitutes: Sharon Bray of Factoryville, cafeteria, aide, maintenance; Sarah Wright of Factoryville, aide and maintenance; Jamie June of Factoryville, maintenance; Stephanie Darmock of Factoryville, aide, cafeteria; Candice Haft of Factoryville, secretary, aide, cafeteria; and Kristen Beicher of Dalton, maintenance.

\*Approved a family leave for Kenneth Yerkes and an unpaid leave next spring from April 28 to May 4 for Susie Shaw.

\*Approved Kelly Buck as a Volunteer Girls Junior High Basketball Coach for 2016-17.

\*Approved a ski club field trip to Smugglers Notch Resort in Jeffersonville, Vt., from Jan. 18 to 20. It was noted that this trip falls on a week with a teacher in-service day and that there will be no cost to the district.

In the board members' reports, Ned Clarke congratulated the fall sports teams for their many successes.

In the administrators reports:

\*Superintendent Rakauskas noted the first marking period had ended and report cards were sent out. He also acknowledged that the District's Wellness Committee presently has a survey online on the district's website soliciting parent feedback about food and nutrition, physical fitness, and social and emotional wellness. He noted that 87 parents had responded as of Monday and hoped hundreds more would provide feedback.

\*Elementary School Principal Brian Kearney said the district had successful parent-teacher conferences, and a "wonderful" Veterans Day program last Thursday. He said a pep rally involving the high school football team, band and cheerleaders would be coming to the elementary school this Friday.

\*High School Principal Mark Murphy also acknowledged an uptick in parent-teacher conferences, and lots of great successes on the athletic field. He noted the football team would be playing this weekend in Scranton for one of eight berths leading to the state PIAA A Title, and that tickets would go on sale Wednesday at \$6 each. He also gave a shout out to a fine Veterans Day program featuring Mike Stevens, and to the band for finishing eighth in the Hershey Cavalcade of Bands, and to the varsity cheerleaders finishing third out of nine teams competing in a competition at Misericordia University.

\*Special Education Coordinator Amy Talerico said she had a busy month and would begin work on the district's Comprehensive Plan and coming up in December would have compliance monitoring from the Northeast Intermediate Unit.

\*Curriculum Director Tania Ross spoke to a \$4,000 STEM grant for which she could not acknowledge the donor until it had cleared certain channels. She also said that she attended a conference last week in an effort to sort out how to improve math scores across the district between sixth grade and Algebra 1. She also spoke to a green house grant for the high school that would benefit the life skills classes.

Also attending the meeting, Monday was a Keystone College student William S. Jacques, who is from Haiti. He told the board thanks for allowing him to witness education in action. Several board members invited him back anytime.