

Trail tax increase expected

by C.J. MARSHALL Published: June 7, 2017

Lackawanna Trail School Board announced at its work session on Monday that it will approve the 2017-2018 budget at its regular meeting on June 12.

Business manager Keith Glynn said there were a few uncertainties in exactly how much money the district will receive from the federal government.

Glynn explained that the budget will be approximately \$20,900,000. The board is also expected to set property taxes at 91.61 mills in Wyoming County - up from 88.71 mills - and 162.43 mills in Lackawanna County - up from 158.56 mills. The increases are within the guidelines permitted by state law without special exceptions, he said.

Board member Ned Clarke reported that the board would be hiring a Special Education Elementary Life Skills Teacher and a Special Education High School Math Teacher on June 12.

Later, during public comment, referring to the two teachers, Cathy Strauch asked if the district will be hiring a new music teacher.

District Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas said no.

Strauch also inquired about the status of the two high school choruses.

Previously, there has been a madrigal chorus at the high school which performs more classical types of music, and a chrysalis chorus which sings more contemporary popular songs.

High school Principal Mark Murphy explained that the number of students participating in chorus has been declining, and as a result the two choruses are being combined into one. If student interest in chorus increases in the future, he said, the district will re-establish the two separate choral groups.

Other matters the board is scheduled to take action on June 12 include:

*Keeping lunch prices at \$2.90 at the high school and \$2.55 at the elementary school. High school breakfast will be \$1.90, and elementary breakfast will be free. Reduced lunch will be \$.40 district-wide, and reduced high school breakfast will be \$.30. All prices remain the same.

*Approve a 63-month lease agreement with First Choice Systems and Solutions Inc. for a postage machine.

*Appoint the school board secretary at a stipend of \$600 per year.

*Appoint the school board treasurer at a stipend of \$600 per year.

*Approve the appointment of Harry Powell as the Athletic Director for the 2017-2018 school year.

*Approve the resignation of Gary Wilmet as the Junior High Girls Basketball Coach.

*Approve an unpaid leave of absence for Debra Joyce from Oct. 24 to Oct. 27.

*Okay a second reading of board policies addressing student wellness as well as service animals in schools.

Board member Joseph Strauch reported that he had attended a meeting of the KingSpry Special Education Law Practice Group in Bethlehem in May 10, and based on the information he learned at the meeting, Strauch explained, he is recommending that some slight changes be made to the latter proposed policy.

The proposed policy as now written suggests that service animals used in the district must be licensed in either Wyoming or Luzerne counties. Strauch said he was informed at the meeting that service animals may be licensed anywhere in the state.