

Trail board to reduce tax rate

C.J. MARSHALL / Published: June 6, 2018

The Lackawanna Trail School Board announced Monday night that the tax increase projected for the next school year will not be as high as reported at last month's meeting.

During its work session on Monday, boardmembers said they intend to approve a final budget of \$21.05 million for 2018-19 school year - an increase of \$108,332 over this year's budget. The new budget sets property taxes at 93.8 mills in Wyoming County - an increase of 2.19 mills. In Lackawanna County, property taxes will be set at 165.68 mills - an increase of 3.25 mills.

When the budget was unveiled in May, proposed property taxes were set at 94.08 mills in Wyoming County, and 167.44 mills in Lackawanna County.

But business manager Keith Glynn reported on Monday that ways were found to reduce the increase in the budget from \$340,785 to \$108,332, allowing the district to reduce the increase in property taxes as well.

"This is a viable option, but only for one year," Glynn warned.

The 2 percent tax increase represents \$204,000 revenue to the district.

Major budget decision points outlined by Glynn included the fact there is no charter school cushion - which represents a direct hit at the fund balance.

During his presentation, Glynn said that an estimated 36 students in the district will be attending charter schools - a loss of approximately \$630,000 to the district.

Another major expense being borne by the district is its contribution to the Pennsylvania State Employees Retirement System, Glynn explained. In 2008-09, Trail's contribution was \$180,031. In 2017-18, the district's contribution is estimated at \$1,341,523.

Glynn also pointed out that the state's basic education subsidy has barely increased over the past 10 years. In 2008, the subsidy was \$5,643,745. For 2017-18, the subsidy is estimated at \$5,673,191 - an increase of \$29,446.

One piece of good news presented by Glynn was the budget includes a proposal to have a teacher provide instrumental music instruction to the elementary students. One teacher would use his or her prep time to teach lessons - 35 to 40 minutes of instruction time per day - at a cost of \$5,500.

The board is expected to approve the final budget at its regular meeting on June 25.

The board will hold a special meeting on June 18 at 7:30 p.m. to appoint a new member to fill the unexpired term of Karl Beichler, who represented Region 2 (Factoryville Borough and Benton Township). Candidates will be interviewed and the replacement chosen by the end of the meeting.

At the beginning of the meeting, the board held a moment of silence for Beichler, who passed away on May 22.

In other business, the board is also expected on June 25 to approve an increase in high school lunch prices from \$2.90 to \$3, and from \$2.55 to \$2.64 for elementary school lunches. Glynn explained the increase is necessary because the district has the necessary funds from the state used to subsidize its school lunch program.

The board is also expected on June 25 to:

*Approve the Title III MOU with the NEIU Consortium for the 2018-19 school year.

*Appoint a treasurer for the board.

*Appoint someone to teach Extended School Year from July 9 to Aug. 9.

*Approve the contract of Tara Crum as the Confidential Administrative Assistant, through June 2019. The contract includes salary increase of \$29 to \$29.50 per hour for a 29-hour work week, effective July 1.