

Trail adopts $22M budget Taxes go up in Lackawanna County, go down in Wyoming County.

By BROOKE WILLIAMS, The Times-Tribune, Scranton, Pa. (TNS) Posted July 1, 2020

The spending plan reduces taxes by 2.43% in Wyoming County, but increases them by 2.51% in Lackawanna County due to a tax reallocation.

“Since the beginning of the pandemic, this board made a commitment to not raise the overall tax revenue of the district and to commit to a zero tax increase budget,” said Keith Glynn, business manager. “With these millage rates, the board does accomplish that. Unfortunately being a double-county district, we do have to have a tax reallocation.”

This brings Lackawanna County to 170.88 mills and Wyoming County to 91.68 mills in real estate taxes. A mill is a $1 tax on each $1,000 of assessed property value.

“This budget was really at the beginning of this process balanced,” Glynn said. “Once the pandemic hit, we did suffer a lot of lost revenue in our expectations, so we’re going to be short approaching on $1 million in this budget.”

This isn’t $1 million of operating costs, he clarified, noting that about $300,000 makes up capital improvements, and there’s a $250,000 contingency because of the uncertainty with the pandemic.

“I didn’t want to leave us shorthanded in unexpected costs,” he said. “Then there’s about $450,000 of overage in expenses, and the big part of that is lost revenue.”

Otherwise, he said the final budget is similar to the proposed budget presented in April.

The board also approved its 2020 homestead and farmstead exclusion resolution.

“Lackawanna County residents will see their bill drop by $1,402 and Wyoming County will see a drop of $2,612, but the overall impact per property that qualifies is $239.51,” Glynn said.

In other business, the board approved Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas as the district’s pandemic coordinator.

“This dovetails with the health and safety plan that every school in Pennsylvania needs to put together,” Rakauskas said.

He invited parents to participate in a virtual town hall July 8 at 7 p.m. about plans for reopening schools. A link to the meeting will be posted on the district’s website.

The board also approved a three-phase reopening plan for athletics, which is subject to change.

Athletic Director Ed Gaidula said Phase 1, through July 11, gives coaches an opportunity to meet with players outdoors in small groups. Phase 2, July 13-24, allows for limited capacity in the gym and weight room, and Phase 3, beginning July 27, opens athletics at a larger capacity with restrictions still in place.