

**Lackawanna Trail passes $24.9M budget**Brooke Williams / Published: June 26, 2019

The Lackawanna Trail School Board passed a final 2019-20 budget of $24.9 million.

While this budget includes a slight tax increase for Wyoming and Lackawanna Counties, the board’s vote to rescind the per capita tax at Monday’s meeting, effective July 1, will offset some costs for taxpayers.

Wyoming County will see a 0.17 percent increase (0.16 mills) and Lackawanna County will see a 0.97 percent increase (1.6 mills).

The final rates are 93.96 mills in Wyoming County and 167.28 mills in Lackawanna County.

Business manager Keith Glynn pointed out that this budget differs from the $21.5 million originally proposed, but assured that around $3 million was not added.

“How I’ve tried to do this is to match the way the PDE (Pennsylvania Department of Education) form works,” Glynn explained. “They show our budgetary reserves, so money we’re not spending from our fund balance as part of our expenditures. That is $3,144,000. Our true budget is up $52,000 from the proposed final budget at $21,662,045.”

The budget passed, with board member Joe Strauch voting no.

The board also approved local tax rates for the 2019-20 fiscal year. This includes 0.5 percent of earnings in Wyoming and Lackawanna Counties for earned income, as well as 0.5 percent of sale price in real estate transfers for both counties.

Board members approved a homestead and farmstead exclusion resolution, which includes a $234.25 reduction in property taxes for all properties that qualify.

Siemens SI was awarded an RFP of $67,900 for an HVAC upgrade in the high school.

Student handbooks for the 2019-20 school year in the elementary center and high school were also approved.

Principal of school management Rebekah King went over revisions made to the high school handbook.

Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas explained that since 2014, the disciplinary review committee has held a separate public meeting to get input on handbook changes.

In the past two years, no one has attended the meeting. The committee still exists, but instead, Rakauskas suggested discussing changes at the board meeting.

“If this works, we’ll stick with it,” he said, noting that the meetings can start up again next year if that’s what the public wants.

Major changes to the handbook include:

\*Incorporating the new school resource officer into the language.

\*Only allowing students to be assigned one primary bus pickup and dropoff location unless a parent/guardian can provide a court order that requires multiple locations.

\*Adding hate speech to examples of misconduct on the school Gmail policy.

\*Bolding “underneath” for t-shirts, long sleeve t-shirts and turtlenecks in the dress code.

\*Removing a reference to a school hotline that has fallen into disuse in light of social media and the district’s website.

\*Clarifying what contraband entails, as it has become a gray area with cell phones, tablets, etc.

\*Changing graduation requirements to reflect Pennsylvania’s requirement of Act 158 completion, to be in effect in the 2021-22 school year.

\*Adding the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

King also presented mockup pamphlets for the Lackawanna Trail Cyber Academy through VLN, which is set to launch this fall.

The enrollment application is live on Trail’s website ltsd.org, along with an inquiry form for people who want more information.

On Aug. 15 at 6:30 p.m., King plans to invite students and their families to a meet and greet event so they could learn about the cyber platform.

The budget passed on Monday included an internet reimbursement for families who choose Trail’s cyber program, provided they meet certain criteria, and the district chose an option that provides students with the necessary equipment for cyber learning.

The board also brainstormed ideas for securing substitute school nurses.

Glynn has conducted research on nearby districts and found that Trail’s pay rate is on the low end.

Other districts are using contracted outside agencies, which is another option in addition to raising pay for substitute nurses.

He plans to return to the board with a recommendation by August.

The board also approved the following on Monday:

\*The resignation of Heather Warriner, secondary science and health teacher, at the end of the 2018-19 school year.

\*Jody Kwiatkowski as a part-time paraprofessional at 4 ¾ hours per day at a rate of $14.38 per hour in the 2019-20 school year.

\*The extended school year appointment of Nicole Weisenfluh for July 8 to Aug. 8.

\*The appointment of Nancy Brown and Erika Chang as mentors at a stipend of $450.

\*Sarah Haus as a volunteer cheerleading coach for the 2019-20 school year.

\*Lunch prices for the 2019-20 school year, including a $0.05 increase in the elementary center.

\*A PATH contract for special education, effective July 1.

\*Adoption of Policy 251: Homeless Students.

\*Second readings of Policy 217: Graduation and Policy 204: Attendance.

\*First readings of Policy 249: Bullying/Cyberbullying, Policy 810: Transportation, Policy 810.1: School Bus Drivers and School Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers and Policy 810.3: School Vehicle Drivers.

The Lackawanna Trail School Board has cancelled its meeting on Monday, July 8, but is scheduled to meet again for a work session on Monday, Aug. 5 at 7:30 p.m.