

**LTSB tax increase expected**BY KEVIN MCCONLOGUE

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The Lackawanna Trail School Board is looking to raise taxes modestly for the2021-22 school year.

At a virtual work session on Monday night, Trail Business Manager Keith Glynn presented a preliminary $21.4 million budget which includes tax increases of 2.27 percent for Lackawanna County property holders. The millage rate for Lackawanna County property holders will rise from 170.88 to 174.76. There is also a small .01 percent tax increase for Wyoming County property holders. The millage rate for Wyoming County will rise from 91.68 to 91.69.

Glynn said that these increases are necessary because of all the infrastructure and tech upgrades that have been going on in the school district. The district is also looking to replace the HVAC system in the high school, as well as purchase some new sports equipment for athletic teams.

“The pandemic has forced us to upgrade a lot of things in both of the schools, especially technology,” Glynn said. “No one wants to raise taxes, but a lot of these things are necessary for the education of our kids.” The board will vote on the proposed budget on May 10.

Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas also presented a proposed academic calendar for the new school year. He said that the hope is to return to a traditional schedule in the high school, rather than the block scheduling that was put in place this year because of the pandemic.

The first day of school for students will be Aug. 26, and the last student day will be May 23, 2022, with graduation set for May 27, 2022. Rakauskas said that the shorter summer break that students will have this year was designed to reduce learning gaps that have resulted from the pandemic. “A lot was lost during the last school year,” Rakauskas said. “We still want students to enjoy their summer vacation, but we believe that not having as much time off will be beneficial to their education. Plus, the May dismissal next year evens everything out a little bit.”

At this point, Rakauskas said that the fully virtual option will not be available for next school year. The emergency declaration set by the Pennsylvania Department of Education for public schools to have a virtual option for students who want it expires on June 30. If the emergency declaration is extended into the next school year, Trail said they would be happy to allow the virtual option again.

“We know that this virtual option has worked for a lot of kids in the district,” Rakauskas said. “If PDE extends the emergency declaration for it, we have no problem carrying it into next school year.”

Trail also has five flexible instructional days, which are days that can be used as asynchronous learning days if a circumstance arises that prevents instruction in a normal manner, such as an impending snow storm.

The board also announced that it has agreed in principle to a teachers’ contract with the Lackawanna Trail Education Association for the next school year. Details will be released when the deal is officially approved May 10.

At next week’s regular meeting, the board will vote to approve,

■ The appointments of: Rajah Mulloth, school district physician for the 2021-22 at a stipend of $10,000; Tyler Gratz, COVID-19 compensatory teacher starting May 11 through July 1, at a pay rate of $25.50 per hour; Sara Cook, COVID-19 compensatory tutor starting May 11 to the end of the school year at a pay rate of $12 per hour; Becky Jo Sherman, bus driver, effective May 11; Steve Beckish, volunteer golf coach for the 2021 season; and Rhett Butler, volunteer golf coach, for the 2021 season.

■ The resignation of: Nicole Pizzola, Interact Club adviser.

The school board next meets on Monday, May 10, at 7:30 p.m. The Zoom link will be posted on the district website, www.ltsd.org.