

Lackawanna Trail approves 2025-26 budget with small tax increase



Lackawanna Trail School District

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The Lackawanna Trail School District approved a balanced 2025-26 final budget with a smaller tax increase than initially expected.

At a school board meeting on June 30, the Lackawanna Trail School Board voted 7-1 to approve the 2025-26 balanced final budget in the amount of \$25,458,482.99. The budget sees a tax increase of 3.70% for Lackawanna County residents who will now have a tax rate of 203.88 mills, and a 0.73% increase for Wyoming County residents whose millage rate will be 92.84 mills. Board member Adrian Bianchi was the lone member to vote against the final budget.

Lackawanna Trail's original proposed budget presented in May showed a 6.1% tax increase for Lackawanna County, and a 3.05% tax increase for Wyoming County. According to Business Manager Keith Glynn, the district's 2025 Homestead & Farmstead Exclusion Resolution played a factor, and the Budget & Finance Committee was able to find ways to save expenditures to not have to raise taxes to the Act I index.

"It's no secret this has been a very tough year trying to come up with a balanced budget," Glynn said. "We (Lackawanna Trail) are one of the only school districts I know of that is not raising taxes up to the index, which is very good news for us. I think this board has done a great job creating this balanced budget, obviously no one likes any tax increase but the fact we could keep ours lower is a very good thing."

Glynn also attributed Lackawanna Trail's "strategic" tax increases as a reason for not having the large increase that some neighboring school districts are seeing in their 2025-26 budget.

"Small tax increases over the years have been able to help us from avoiding the giant tax increase that would need to happen if we didn't do those strategic increases," he said.

Lackawanna Trail High School's new principal will be a familiar face. Board members officially approved the appointment of Cody Opalka as principal of Lackawanna Trail High School effective July 1 at a salary of \$90,000. Opalka has served as the high school's acting principal since August 2024 when former principal Mark Murphy was placed on administrative leave.

"Thank you for giving me this opportunity," Opalka said to board members after his appointment. "Last year was truly a fun and great experience for me and I am very much looking forward to the future."

As the summer goes along, some renovations are going on at the high school. The main office vestibule is being remodeled with school safety measures in mind. The board also approved the replacement of the gymnasium sound system at a cost of \$45,051, and the cafeteria sound system at a cost of \$18,421, funding for both will come from the Future Capital Projects fund.

Before the meeting, administrators held an open house of the now fully completed Wellness Center building at the high school. The building features a brand new weight room with all new equipment that was all donated; new locker rooms for athletic teams; an athletic training room; as well as classrooms for use during the school day.

"The district would like to personally thank all of the generous donors who made this building a reality," Superintendent Matt Rakauskas said. "Hopefully this building will be an asset for generations of future Lackawanna Trail students to come."

In other business, the board approved:

The appointments of: Jamie Hannon as Junior High Girls Basketball Coach; John Patrick Gilroy as Junior High Girls Basketball Assistant Coach; Rachel Bragan Garcia as Varsity Girls Basketball Assistant Coach; Scot Wasilchak as Varsity Track & Field Assistant Coach; John Marx as a volunteer softball coach; and Ashley Gesek as a volunteer girls basketball assistant coach.

The resignation of Stephanie Cook from her maintenance II position.

The adoption of the following policies: 103-Discrimination/Harassment Affecting Students; 104-Discrimination/Harassment Affecting Staff; 234-Pregnant/Parenting/Married Students; 249-Bullying/Cyberbullying; 252-Dating Violence.

The first reading of the following policies: 004-Membership; 007-Policy Manual Access; 246-School Wellness; 718-Service Animals In Schools.