

School tax rate expected to stay same as last year

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Taxpayers will be asked to OK \$5.8 million levy at Sept. 28 annual meeting

Residents of the Cedar Grove-Belgium School District will be asked to approve a tax levy of \$5.8 million, a 5% increase over last year's levy, at the annual meeting Wednesday, Sept. 28.

Total expenditures are expected to be almost \$15.1 million

The budget hearing and meeting will be at 7 p.m. in the high school study hall.

If the equalized valuation increases 4%, as it has in the last past years, the tax rate will be \$9.30 per \$1,000 equalized valuation, about the same as last year.

If the equalized valuation of the district does not increase, the tax rate will be \$9.67 per \$1,000 equalized valuation, which is 40 cents more than last year.

The district's equalized valuation will not be known until mid-October, said Julie Birschbach, the district's business manager who developed the budget.

The district expects to receive \$619,000 less in per-pupil state aid, but savings from switching insurance carriers and having teachers and staff pay 12% of the premium, as required by the state budget bill, will offset that loss, Supt. Steve Shaw said.

"What we fear most is what will happen next year?" Shaw said. "When you save on health-care costs, it's a one-year thing, and we don't expect an increase in state aid any time soon."

Shaw did not have the third-Friday in September enrollment count, the number used by the state in figuring per pupil aid to districts, but he's cautiously optimistic that the numbers will bring in the \$5.5 million projected in state aid.

"We expect a modest growth," Shaw said. "We have more students in the middle school and high school and more 4K students, but they only count for half students (because the school has a half-day 4-year-old kindergarten program)."

Now that the \$6 million school renovation and technical education addition have been completed, Shaw said, he does not expect any major capital expenditures next year.

Debt payments will require a \$1.4 million levy.

The district expects to save money with its new maintenance plan in which a supervisor is appointed for each school building. The supervisors report to the building principal and Shaw. The new system was developed in response to the retirement of Carl Huenink, longtime building and grounds supervisor.