

Town Board approves 2.7% hike in tax levy

Written by Mark Jaeger

Wednesday, 17 November 2010 17:20

Unexpected increase in community's tax base means tax rate will rise by just 6 cents per \$1,000

With the nation's slumping economy in mind, Town of Saukville officials took a conservative approach while preparing the 2011 budget.

That cautious philosophy paid off when the spending plan unanimously approved during Monday's budget hearing turned out even better than anticipated.

As officials crafted the budget, they anticipated the local tax rate rising by 3.2% to support the \$395,215 tax levy.

After receiving final valuation figures from the state, Town Chairman Barb Jobs said the town's 2011 budget will only bump taxes up 2.7%. The town anticipated its valuation would fall, but it actually increased about \$870,000 — to just over \$205 million.

"When we were making our estimates for the budget, we chose to be a little conservative," Jobs said.

The new tax rate will be \$1.93 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, an increase of six cents from last year.

That means town taxes on a \$200,000 home will rise from \$376 to \$388, an increase of just \$12.

"We knew our constituents in the Northern Ozaukee School District are going to see quite an increase, so we wanted to keep the town costs down while keeping the ship running," Jobs said during the budget hearing.

She said the spending picture also brightened last week after the Ozaukee County Board adopted a budget that retained \$25,000 in highway aids to the town.

A large contingent of county supervisors sought to eliminate the highway aid, but the funding was retained by a 16-14 vote.

To tap that money, the town must contract with the Ozaukee County Highway Department for roadwork. Every dollar of county money used for that work must be matched by town tax dollars.

Jobs said she and other town leaders from around the county fought to retain the highway aids.

"Obviously, we are not going to get that money from the county next year. We were told that by board members," she said.

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Town Clerk Chris Lear said the budget largely held spending in check and included reductions in expenses for insurance, heating and staff.

“There are very few changes from last year’s budget except for the reductions we’ve made,” Lear said. “We’ve accounted for every dime we intend to spend.”

One of the few increases was in public safety, which rose about \$4,700, to \$177,870.

Lear attributed much of that to increased payments requested by the Newburg Fire Department for fire protection.

The \$571,745 budget was endorsed by the half-dozen residents who attended the hearing and unanimously adopted by the Town Board.