

Port city budget calls for tax break

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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Port Washington city officials were poised to approve on Tuesday a 2013 budget that will decrease property taxes for most homeowners.

The Finance and License Committee on Monday recommended the \$8.65 million budget and corresponding \$4.8 million tax levy for 2013.

Committee members made a number of minor tweaks to the proposed budget, among them a decision to levy as much as possible for the coming year.

Originally, they had proposed reducing the tax levy by about \$3,200 — a number that grew to \$4,900 after the state notified the city it would receive an additional \$1,750 in revenue. ‘

But because this levy would limit the city’s ability to tax next year, committee members agreed to increase the levy to the maximum allowed by law.

The extra \$4,900 will go to pay down the city’s debt, the committee decided.

“Repaying debt is almost always a beautiful thing,” committee member Joe Dean said.

Committee member Doug Biggs said he favored the measure because of the flexibility it will give the city next year and the fact the extra funds are directed to debt retirement.

The proposed budget maintains city services and would fund projects such as the treatment of ash trees against the emerald ash borer and improvements to the walkway leading to the north beach.

The estimated tax rate of about \$5.75 per \$1,000 assessed valuation is a decrease of about two cents from last year, City Administrator Mark Grams said.

For the owner of a home valued at \$225,000 last year that increased the average of .6% during the reassessment — to \$226,350 — taxes will increase between \$2 and \$3, he said. However, this will be offset by an \$11 decrease in the

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recycling fee.

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The Common Council was expected to vote on the budget and levy following a public hearing Tuesday night.